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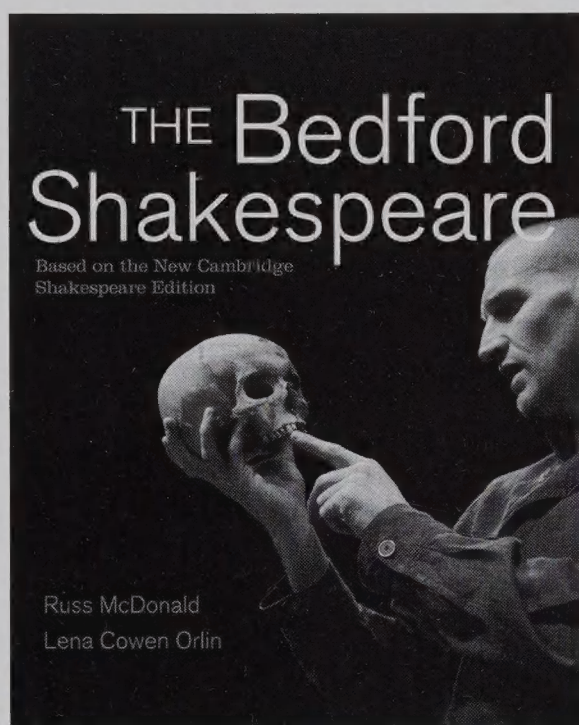


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PMLA

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For libraries and other institutions, a subscription in 2015 to the electronic format of *PMLA* alone is \$200 and to the print and electronic formats is \$220 (domestic and Canadian) or \$250 (foreign). Subscriptions also include online access to the 2002–14 volumes. Agents deduct four percent as their fee. Claims for undelivered issues will be honored if they are received within six months of the publication date; thereafter the single-issue price will be charged. To order an institutional subscription, call or write the Member and Customer Services Office of the association (646 576-5166; subscrip@mla.org).

Single copies of the January, March, May, and October issues can be purchased for \$12 each; the November (Program) issue is \$35. Issues for the current year and the previous one are available at the MLA Bookstore (www.mla.org/store/CID70) and from the Member and Customer Services Office of the association (646 576-5161; bookorders@mla.org).

An online archive of *PMLA* issues from 1884 to 2009 is available through JSTOR (www.jstor.org).

Volumes up to 2000 can be obtained on microfilm from NA Publishing, Inc., PO Box 998, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-0998 (800 420-6272; info@napubco.com; www.napubco.com/microform-academics.html).

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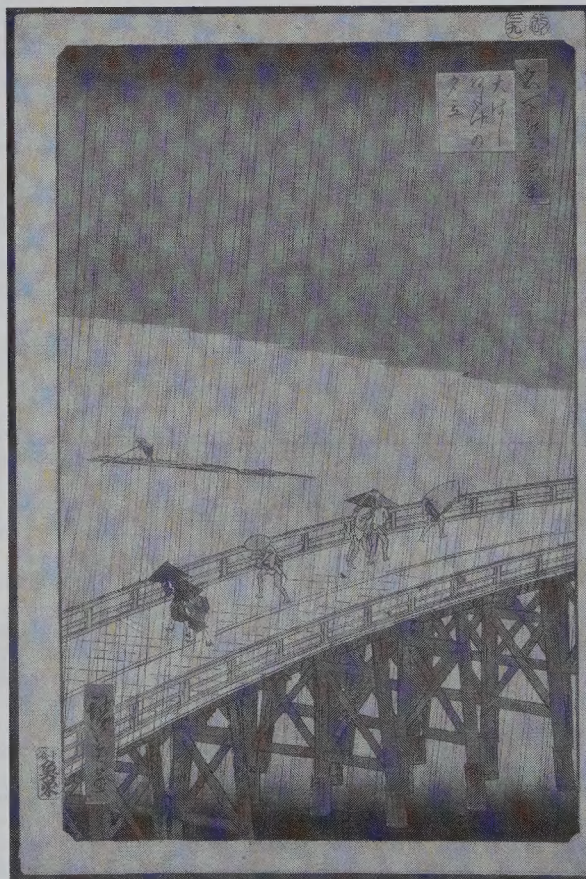
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Cover: Detail of Andō Hiroshige, *Sudden Shower over Shin-Ōhashi Bridge and Atake*, 1857. Color woodblock print, 36.3 × 24.1 cm. Library of Congress. (Full image at left.)

A Statement of Editorial Policy

PMLA welcomes essays of interest to those concerned with the study of language and literature. As the publication of a large and heterogeneous association, the journal is receptive to a variety of topics, whether general or specific, and to all scholarly methods and theoretical perspectives. The ideal *PMLA* essay exemplifies the best of its kind, whatever the kind; addresses a significant problem; draws out clearly the implications of its findings; and engages the attention of its audience through a concise, readable presentation. Manuscripts in languages other than English are accepted for review but must be accompanied by a detailed summary in English (generally of 1,000–1,500 words) and must be translated into English if they are recommended to the Editorial Board. Articles of fewer than 2,500 words or more than 9,000 words are not considered for publication. The word count includes notes but excludes works-cited lists and translations, which should accompany foreign language quotations. The MLA urges its contributors to be sensitive to the social implications of language and to seek wording free of discriminatory overtones.

Only members of the association may submit articles to *PMLA*. For a collaboratively written essay to be eligible for submission, all coauthors must be members of the MLA. *PMLA* does not publish book reviews or new works of fiction, nor does it accept articles that were previously published in any language. An article is considered previously published if it appears in print or in an online outlet with the traits of publication, such as editorial selection of content, a formal presentation, and ongoing availability. Online contexts that typically lack these traits include personal Web pages, discussion groups, and repositories. Each article submitted is sent to two reviewers, usually one consultant reader and one member of the Advisory Committee. Articles recommended by these readers are then sent to the members of the Editorial Board, who meet periodically with the editor to make final decisions. Until a final decision is reached, the author's name is not made known to consultant readers, to members of the Advisory Committee and the Editorial Board, or to the editor. Because the submission of an article simultaneously to more than one refereed journal can result in duplication of the demanding task of reviewing the manuscript, it is *PMLA*'s policy not to review articles that are under consideration by other journals. An article found to have been simultaneously submitted elsewhere will not be published in *PMLA* even if it has already been accepted for publication by the Editorial Board.

Submissions, prepared according to the *MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing*, should be sent electronically or, in duplicate, as hard copy to the Managing Editor, *PMLA*, Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789 (pmlasubmissions@mla.org). With each print submission please include a self-addressed envelope and enough postage for one copy to be returned. Authors' names should not appear on manuscripts; instead, a cover sheet, with the author's name and address and the title of the article, should accompany each manuscript. Authors should not refer to themselves in the first person in the submitted

Forthcoming in *PMLA*

IN THE MARCH ISSUE

Editor's Column

JULIANNE WERLIN. "Francis Bacon and the Art of Misinterpretation"

SARAH VAN DER LAAN. "Songs of Experience: Confessions, Penitence, and the Value of Error in Tasso and Spenser"

SAIKAT MAJUMDAR. "The Provincial Polymath: The Curious Cosmopolitanism of Nirad C. Chaudhuri"

CHRISTOPHER FINDEISEN. "Injuries of Class: Mass Education and the American Campus Novel"

CHRISTINE HOFFMANN. "Folly 2012! The Campaign for Foolishness in Twenty-First-Century Politics"

SCOTT POUND. "Kenneth Goldsmith and the Poetics of Information"

Theories and Methodologies

Reframing Postcolonial and Global Studies in the Longer Durée: introduction by Sahar Amer and Laura Doyle; essays by Sahar Amer, Glaire D. Anderson, Jane Hwang Degenhardt, Laura Doyle, Barbara Fuchs, Geraldine Heng, Annette Damayanti Lienau, Lydia H. Liu, Mary Louise Pratt, Shumei Shih, and Hayrettin Yücesoy

The Changing Profession

The Semipublic Intellectual: Academia, Criticism, and the Internet Age: introduction by Lili Loofbourow and Phillip Maciak; essays by Hua Hsu, Evan Kindley, Natalia Cecire, Sharon Marcus, Michael Bérubé, and Salamishah Tillet

Little-Known Documents

EILEEN CHANG. "Chinese Translation: A Vehicle of Cultural Influence." Introduction and notes by Christopher Lee

text or notes if such references would identify them; any necessary references to the author's previous work, for example, should be in the third person. If the contribution includes any materials (e.g., quotations that exceed fair use, illustrations, charts, other graphics) that have been taken from another source, the author must obtain written permission to reproduce them in print and electronic formats.

Features in *PMLA*

Manuscripts and correspondence related to the features described below should be sent to the Managing Editor, *PMLA*, Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789 (pmlasubmissions@mla.org).

Special Topic

Articles on the general topic are invited; the subtopics listed are provided by way of example and suggestion only. Submissions to *PMLA* must meet the requirements given in the statement of editorial policy.

Cultures of Reading

Deadline for submissions: 7 November 2016

Coordinators: Evelyne Ender (Hunter Coll., City Univ. of New York) and Deidre Lynch (Harvard Univ.)

What diverse practices, desires, and norms are concealed by the too familiar gerund in this title? What culturally specific and historically contingent institutions and techniques shape individuals' encounters with their reading matter? Do those encounters serve ends beyond the decoding of meanings or the closing of a hermeneutic circle? Questions like these energize an emergent field of inquiry that involves, among others, literary critics, book historians, anthropologists, and scholars of religion.

The discipline of literary studies has a long-standing commitment to ideals of close and critical reading. As the scope of our discipline has broadened, however, so has our conception of what reading entails, inviting a new attentiveness to practices involving sociable groups as well as solitary individuals and to skimming and skipping as well as word-by-word analyses. These developments raise in turn historical or comparative questions. Consider, for example, the different assumptions about the relationship between verbal structures and mental states that inform the reading of scriptures, a novel, postings on *Facebook*, and an article in *PMLA*. A new readiness to explore the physical, temporal, and spatial modalities of reading has led scholars to scrutinize the material conditions of this activity at a time when our reading matter appears on a screen as often as it does in a codex. Our understanding of reading has been altered as well by the fact that many researchers in the humanities now delegate to their computers the task of culling information

from extensive data sets of machine-readable texts. Prompted by such rapid technological changes, our discipline is reexamining the long history of reading and of reading experiences. New ethnographies have shown meanwhile that there is much to learn from the close study not only of texts but also of traces, alphabets, typefaces, and other signifying systems constitutive of distinctive communities.

The *PMLA* Editorial Board invites essays that build on these explorations of reading as a plural activity and that consider readers and the social institutions of literacy in any period or cultural tradition. Potential contributors are encouraged to think about reading expansively—and to consider it as a social practice that enrolls the reader in textual communities or as an integral aspect of particular forms of subjectivity or of memory. Submissions may, for example, consider religious reading and the relation between devotional practice and modern notions of literacy as a human right and a tool of human emancipation. They might consider the times and spaces that reading demands and creates. Other topics might include the effects of reading in translation (i.e., across languages and cultures); sociable modes of reading (the book club); reading and manners, good and bad; reading and vocalization or recitation; the marks and other traces that readers leave behind them; accounts of physiologies and pathologies of reading (such as addiction to novels or comics); the reading practices of digital natives.

Criticism in Translation

MLA members are invited to submit to the *PMLA* Editorial Board proposals for translations. Articles, as well as chapters or sections of books that can function as independent units, will be considered. The originals may be in any language. Two types of proposals are welcome: (1) significant scholarship from earlier periods that has not lost its forcefulness and whose retrieval in English in *PMLA* would be a noteworthy event for a broad body of readers and (2) contemporary work of sufficient weight and potential influence to merit the attention of the field as a whole.

A member who wishes to make a proposal should first ascertain that no previous English translation exists. The proposer should then provide the managing editor with the following materials: (1) a photocopy of the original essay, (2) an extended summary of the entire essay in English, (3) an introductory statement of approximately 1,000 words, prepared in accordance with MLA style, that will be published with the essay if the essay is accepted, (4) information on the copyright status of the original (if the translation is accepted for publication, the proposer will be responsible for obtaining permission to print it). In addition, if the proposer wishes to serve as translator of the essay or to designate a translator (who must also be an MLA member), a 1,000-word sample of the translation should be submitted; otherwise the Editorial Board will select a translator.

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IN OTHER ISSUES

- SUZANNE BOST. "Messy Archives and Materials That Matter: Making Knowledge with the Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers"
- ANNE DWYER. "Standstill as Extinction: Viktor Shklovsky's Poetics and Politics of Movement in the 1920s and 1930s"
- YASSER ELHARIRY. "Abdelwahab Meddeb, Sufi Poets, and the New Franco-phone Lyric"
- JONATHAN SCOTT ENDERLE. "Common Knowledge: Epistemology and the Beginnings of Copyright Law"
- MARY A. FAVRET. "The Pathos of Reading"
- GORDON FRASER. "Troubling the Cold War Logics of Annihilation: Apocalyptic Temporalities in *The Lone Ranger* and *Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*"
- NICOLE GRAY. "Aurality in Print: Revisiting Roger Williams's *A Key into the Language of America*"
- EMILY HYDE. "Flat Style: *Things Fall Apart* and Its Illustrations"
- ANDREW KOPEC. "DH, Inc.: Literary Criticism and the Fate of a Profession"
- SEBASTIAN LECOURT. "Idylls of the Buddh': Buddhist Modernism and Victorian Poetics in Colonial Ceylon"
- MARIT J. MACARTHUR. "Monotony, the Churches of Poetry Reading, and Sound Studies"
- REGINA MARTIN. "Absentee Capitalism and the Politics of Conrad's Imperial Novels"
- PAULA McDOWELL. "Defoe's *Essay upon Literature* and Eighteenth-Century Histories of Mediation"
- ANNE MCTAGGART. "Pity and Poetics in Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*"
- ANCA PARVULESCU. "Kafka's Laughter: On Joy and the Kafkaesque"
- CHRISTOPHER PIZZINO. "The Doctor versus the Dagger: Comics Reading and Cultural Memory"
- ADAM POTKAY. "Contested Emotions: Pity and Gratitude from the Stoics to Swift and Wordsworth"
- MATTHEW BURROUGHS PRICE. "A Genealogy of Queer Detachment"

(continued)

Forthcoming in PMLA

IN OTHER ISSUES *(continued)*

ROCHELLE RIVES. "Facing Wilde; or, Emotion's Image"

GILLIAN SILVERMAN. "Neurodiversity and the Revision of Book History"

GREGORY STONE. "Animals Are from Venus, Humans from Mars: Averroes's Aristotle and the Rationality of Emotion in Guido Cavalcanti's *Donna me prega*"

Criticism in Translation

JACQUES DERRIDA AND SAFAA FATHY. "Contre-Jour." Introduction and translation by Max Cavitch

Little-Known Documents

W. E. B. DU BOIS. "The Princess Steel." Introduction by Adrienne Brown and Britt Rusert

DAVID LODGE. "Interview with Chris Walsh." Introduction and notes by William Baker

ANTONIO DE NEBRIJA. "Of Language and Empire: Prologue to *Grammar of the Castilian Language* (1492)." Introduction and translation by Magalí Armillas-Tiseyra

Theories and Methodologies

Commentaries on Andrew Cole's The Birth of Theory: essays by C. D. Blanton, Kathleen Davis, Warren Montag, Jane O. Newman, John Parker, and Jordana Rosenberg; reply by Andrew Cole

Learning to Read: essays by Stephen Arata, Christopher Cannon, Yves Citton, Patricia Crain, Andrew Elfenbein, Rita Felski, Joshua Gang, John Guillory, Michael Holquist, Kinohi Nishikawa, Leah Price, David Steiner, and Lisa Zunshine

The translated essays should normally not exceed PMLA's 9,000-word limit. The Editorial Board will approve or decline the proposals, evaluate the quality of the translations, and cooperate with the proposers and translators.

Little-Known Documents

MLA members are invited to submit to the PMLA Editorial Board proposals regarding little-known documentary material that merits the attention of a broad range of readers. Consideration will be given to archival data from any period and in any language that do not exceed PMLA's 9,000-word limit.

A member who wishes to make a proposal should provide the managing editor with the following materials: (1) a photocopy of the document, (2) an extended summary of the document in English, (3) an introductory statement of approximately 1,000 words, prepared in accordance with MLA style, that will be published with the document if it is accepted, (4) information on the copyright status of the original (if the document is accepted for publication, the proposer will be responsible for obtaining permission to print it). In addition, if the document is not in English and if the proposer wishes to serve as translator or to designate a translator (who must also be an MLA member), the proposal should include a 1,000-word sample of the translation; otherwise the Editorial Board will select a translator of accepted non-English material. The Editorial Board will approve or decline the proposals.

Solicited Contributions

The editor and the Editorial Board periodically invite studies and commentaries by specific authors on topics of wide interest. These contributions appear in the following series: Theories and Methodologies, The Changing Profession, The Book Market, The Journal World, Letters from Librarians, and Correspondents at Large. MLA members are welcome to suggest topics that might be addressed under these rubrics.

Editor's Column

The Fragility of Languages

In memory of Patricia (Patsy) Yaeger, *PMLA* editor 2006–11

A FEW YEARS AGO, SEDUCED BY THE BRAVE NEW WORLD PROMISED by the Internet and digital libraries, I started collecting, or, more precisely, mining, data on dead, disappearing, and threatened languages. What I found was overwhelming and frightening. I'm not sure what came first—the sense of being overwhelmed or the fear—nor was the source of either response clear. Was I overwhelmed and frightened by discovering that so many languages were disappearing at an alarming rate or by the weight of the data? For someone trained in a field defined by *poiēsis* and *aisthēsis*, mining data is one thing; reading them is another proposition altogether. Seeking to understand the fragility of languages at the turn of the millennium, I would sit in front of massive databases, facing the evidence of the devastation wrought on the world linguistic map and trying to interpret my feelings.

The UNESCO *Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* confronted me with the bleak reality of language endangerment measured in maps, graphs, and data sets (figs. 1 and 2). The facts are not hard to fathom. Sifting the data, I discovered that at least forty-three percent of the estimated 6,000 languages spoken in the world after 1950 are endangered, that 576 are critically endangered, that 528 are severely endangered, and that 231 are extinct. This information is confirmed by other sources. *Ethnologue*, one of the most authoritative publications on world languages, reports that since it started publication in 1950, 373 languages have died, a “rate of loss amounting to 6 languages per year” (“Endangered Languages”). David Crystal, the eminent linguist, estimates that half of all languages

will be extinct by the end of the twenty-first century, which means “there is a language dying out somewhere in the world every two weeks or so.” In an article published in the science journal *Nature* in 2003, the ecologist William Sutherland concludes, after applying “internationally agreed criteria for classifying species,” that “languages are more threatened than birds and mammals” (277).

And because languages are dying across all continents and regions of the world, a journey through UNESCO’s long spreadsheet on endangered languages feels like tracking a virus as it circulates: the list begins with South Italian, with 7,500,000 speakers left, and ends with ǁXegwi, a language once spoken in southern Africa but now considered extinct. From the heartland of Europe (lower Saxony) to Vanuatu, in the South Pacific, the world seems littered with dying or dead languages. Language death sits in front of us in solid factum. Why, then, do I come out of the mine shafts of data overwhelmed and uncertain? Why do I feel that the graphs, charts, and spreadsheets do not tell us much about what is at stake in the endangerment of languages?

Nothing but the Facts

I have to thank the new world of the digital humanities for making all this information available. Heavy data mining helps to overcome the doubts of those who might consider

the loss of languages minor in comparison with the other threats the world faces, such as global warming, infectious disease, and dying species. Work of this sort makes those of us pushing for a digital humanities drool. Data, data, everywhere, and many things to do with them. Moreover, the great databases and atlases of language loss allow for the kind of interactivity that makes the study of dying languages sexy.

And yet I constantly ask myself whether such archiving will halt the virus that is killing off languages. In moments of doubt and despair, I even find myself questioning the motives behind the documentation of endangered languages. Are some of us jumping onto this bandwagon only because it is technologically sexy and gives the humanities a veneer of empirical weight and functionality, or is this truly a new way of making scholars of language matter? I keep my doubts private because I don’t want to appear to be looking a gift horse in the mouth. Like many of my colleagues, I’m gratified to see the work of preserving languages drawing funding from such prestigious institutions as UNESCO and the National Science Foundation. For people in the humanities, this kind of serious funding is a recognition that what we do might, after all, have value in the real world. Still, I often wonder what work documentation, conceived as an act of preservation, performs when it comes to the lives of the people whose languages are condemned to die.

The more languages are reduced to data, the more they lose an element of their linguisticity, just as the digitalization of ancient manuscripts makes them lose their aura. Where speakers have disappeared and the statistic has become their supplement, as it were, data seem just another tomb, a reminder of the absent one. The data present clear evidence of the crisis of language

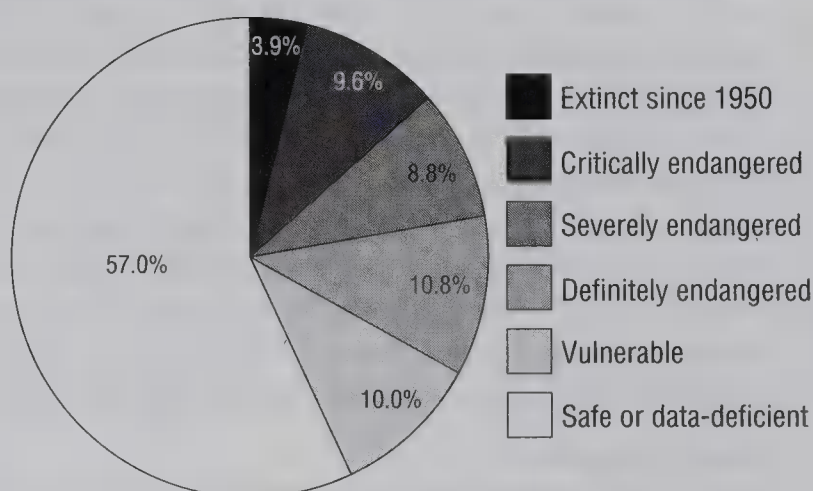
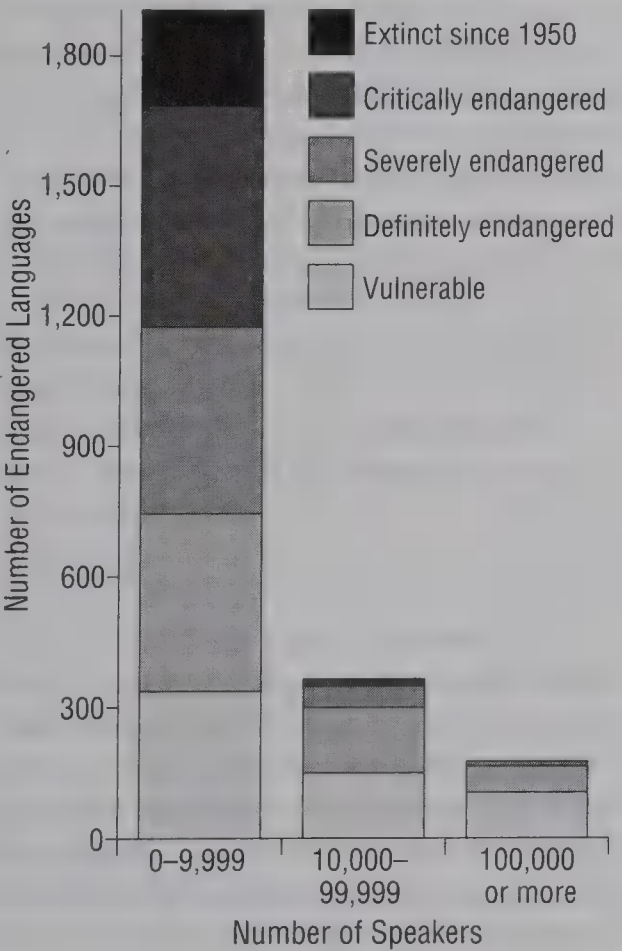


FIG. 1

The status of the world's six thousand languages.

loss, but they don't arouse the kind of feeling that makes us march in the streets to save tigers, to oppose the extraction of shale gas in our states, or to reverse climate change. Perhaps the story of dying languages is best told through their diminishing speakers rather than through the mere documentation of their disappearance. In thinking about the people who speak a language, we can bring the data to life, put a subject behind them. In 2011 only two people spoke Ter Sami, in the Kola Peninsula (Russia); only four spoke Lengilu; the chief of the Mabire in Oulek, Chad, was the only speaker of Mabire left in his village; and Tehuelche, once spoken by hunters in Patagonia, had been reduced to four speakers. The Ayapaneco language, spoken in Tabasco, Mexico, for centuries, has been reduced to two speakers, but they "refuse to talk to each other" (Tuckman). In Australia twenty-eight Aboriginal languages have only one speaker each left.



Who are those people? What is their sense of being in the world? What happens to the last speakers of a language when they talk and all they hear is the echo of their own voices? What is the status of an address without an addressee? What does it mean for a language to die? Can the death of a language be dissociated from that of the last person who speaks it? *Ethnologue* defines extinct languages as the ones that "have fallen completely out of (even symbolic) use, since no one retains a sense of ethnic identity associated with the language" ("Endangered Languages"). More than ethnic identity, however, the death of a language is closely associated with the deaths of speakers because, as Crystal aptly puts it, "once a language has lost its last native speaker, resurrecting it is difficult." I enjoy reading stories of heroic linguists and anthropologists rushing to remote areas to save an endangered language through documentation, but I'm touched most by narratives of people who hold on to their languages until their last breath because such accounts are a reminder that what remains in our archives after documentation is not the language itself but its diminished afterlife.

Before dying at the age of eighty-five, Boa Sr, the last speaker of the Bo language in the Andaman Islands, left behind her recorded voice. Her songs and stories are a touching testament to a linguistic universe that thrived in the Indian Ocean islands, but they are also a reminder of the loss of a person, a culture, and perhaps a way of life (Shariatmadari). Given the technologies now available, leading linguists seem confident that documentation can enable the revival of a language even after the deaths of its speakers. Dolly Pentreath, the last speaker of Cornish, died in 1777, but the language could be recuperated through extant writing in it. Some scholars believe that codification—"a long and traceable written history" (Moseley 6)—can enable language revival. Still, the Cornish sustained by its guardians through great effort is not the

FIG. 2
Degrees of endangerment by size of speaker group.

same as the one that lived in the eighteenth century. I have traveled through Cornwall many times, and the absence of any speakers of Cornish makes it a place unlike its neighbor Wales, where Welsh and Welshness survive, sometimes in unlikely places, such as among Somali immigrants.

Heroic stories of language preservation conceal the complexity of language loss, its causes and consequences. A language is endangered when its native speakers feel powerless in the face of encroaching languages or think that their language is a shameful mark of backwardness. Many native languages in the Americas did not survive Spanish conquest or European expansionism, and those that did have been on the defensive ever since. For example, Quechua survived in Bolivia and Peru, but for years it has fought to emerge out of its colonial association with the primitive and archaic and to resist the postcolonial elites' desire to contain or repress native rights in the Andes. Languages are sometimes repressed or prohibited by a powerful state, as Catalan was under the Franco dictatorship in Spain. Banned from educational institutions after the civil war, Catalan quickly eroded; with it went the cultural life of Catalonia. Only with the restoration of democracy in Spain in the 1970s was a new system of language immersion developed to ensure the survival of the language and its culture—yet Catalonians like the author Quim Monzó continue to worry that, given the language's long history of prohibition and marginalization, Catalan speakers will "end up believing that they are to blame for their own maltreatment and humiliation."

Killing Them Softly

Narratives of language death tend to focus on the relentless aggression of the languages of the powerful against the linguistic interests of the powerless. The primary enemy of threatened languages, what Joshua A. Fishman calls the source of "new dangers" to

them, is assumed to be globalization, seen as an unrelenting force: "Whereas heretofore their dangers derived from the superior armed might, wealth and numbers of immediate neighbours, today's dangers are more ubiquitous. Today, the worldwide process of globalization of the economy, communication and entertainment media, not to mention modernization-based consumerism as a way of life have threatened to sweep away everything locally authentic and different that may stand in their way" ("Reversing" xiii). A recurring reality of all efforts to reverse language loss is what Fishman calls "the ethnolinguistic omnipresence of a Big Brother" ("Why" 9). The big brother may be a language of empire, regional languages that have come to occupy the position left vacant by European languages, or languages that have become identified with new spaces of social expression in a globalized world.

And yet languages may die without notice by much of the world. What appears to be a linguistic gift might confer a debt that signals the inevitable death of a language. Some languages are endangered by well-intentioned projects of standardization. On one hand, a standardized language acquires an orthography that may enable it to thrive and even become hegemonic. Yoruba provides an example. It prospered after being standardized in the second half of the nineteenth century, largely through the work of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first African bishop of the Niger. Crowther's translation of the Bible into Yoruba was a landmark in the history of the language, setting a standard for writing and other communication, serving as a model for language primers, novels, plays, and other kinds of texts, and laying the groundwork for a robust film and video industry in the second half of the twentieth century. On the other hand, the standardization of a language may lead to the slow deaths of related and contiguous languages, reduced to dialects. As Yoruba was standardized, its usage and prestige increased;

at the same time, the lives of languages associated with it were shortened. The establishment of a standard Yoruba meant the exclusion of forms of expression that could not be fitted into the new linguistic order of things.

The march of Yoruba in the twenty-first century, like that of other hegemonic languages in Africa, has been driven by the creativity opened up by technologies of writing and by the electronic media—but the good fortunes of the authorized and standardized language have masked the adverse effects it has had on less fortunate tongues in western Nigeria. Today many Oko people in Kogi, a state in Nigeria, speak or understand Yoruba although there is no Yoruba community in their “immediate neighborhood,” E. Adegbiya notes. “It is sometimes considered a thing of pride for an Oko person to be able to speak Yoruba because it is one of Nigeria’s three major functionally and officially recognized languages” (289). Having entered the Oko tent by its nose, Yoruba seeks, like the proverbial camel, to take the whole cultural space. How does one respond to this situation? Part of me feels that we cannot just sit back and watch a language die, but another part tries to see the matter from the perspective of those who give up their languages for the future they imagine. I bemoan the alienation that the loss of Oko entails and fear for the threat that it faces, but who am I to tell the young Oko not to watch Yoruba soap operas on satellite television or not to have fantasies of modernity that are only available to them in the authorized languages?

When a Language Dies

Should literary scholars be invested in the cause of preserving languages, or is this a business better left to linguists and ethnographers? This question is complicated by the emergence of what appears to be an unspoken rift between language and literature, but that is a subject for another column. What is easy to recognize is that if language is the key to

literary expression and if literature enhances the life and fate of language, then this might be the time for a linguistic turn in our field: a greater preoccupation with the intimate relation between language and literature. It is significant that almost all attempts to preserve endangered languages are pegged to speech. According to Mark Turin, the World Oral Literature Project is “an urgent global initiative to document and disseminate endangered oral literatures before they disappear without record.” When a language is unwritten, as most vulnerable languages are, we can experience what it is or was to its people through their oral literature. A dead language can survive in writing, as Latin has, but it becomes a fossil without the exchange of its sounds in a speech community. It is in the sound of a language that one is most likely to discover the essence of its being and of its fragility.

A poem by the anthropologist Miguel León-Portilla captures what happens when a language dies:

Cuando muere una lengua
las cosas divinas,
estrellas, sol y luna;
las cosas humanas,
pensar y sentir,
no se reflejan ya
en ese espejo.

When a language dies
the divine things,
stars, sun and moon;
the human things,
thinking and feeling,
are no longer reflected
in that mirror.

(my trans.)

I think now about the beauty and fragility of language as I recall the life of Patricia (Patsy) Yaeger, friend, colleague, and my predecessor as editor of *PMLA*. Many years ago, when she was acting chair of the English department at the University of Michigan, Patsy used to open every meeting not with a prayer or pledge but with the reading of a poem. I

recall coming a few minutes late to one such meeting when she was in the middle of reading William Wordsworth's "We Are Seven." I caught the last three verses of the poem, the fragile yet stubborn words of a "little Maid" using her mastery of words to have her will in a perilous world:

"And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

"How many are you, then," said I,
"If they two are in heaven?"
Quick was the little Maid's reply,
"O Master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away; for still
The little Maid would have her will,
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

Letting a language die is an injustice, a denial of will to those who speak it.

Simon Gikandi

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Ulysses Pianola

PAUL K. SAINT-AMOUR

"Does this thing play?" . . .

"Like a musical gorilla with fingers all of one length. And a sort of soul."

—H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay* (1909)

The pianola "replaces"

Sappho's barbitos.

—Ezra Pound, *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920)

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LITERARY STUDIES HAS A GRAMOPHONE PROBLEM. WHEN REACHING for a sound-reproduction technology to set beside literature, scholars now habitually grasp the phonographic assemblage. Understandably so: this is a device whose best-known names—*phonograph*, *graphophone*, *gramophone*¹—announce its relation to writing, specifically its claim to write speech. Much of phonography's early discourse reinforces the conceit of vocal inscription these names encode. "Whoever may speak into the mouthpiece of the phonograph," said *Scientific American* in 1877, "has the assurance that his speech may be reproduced audibly in his own tones long after he himself has turned to dust" ("Wonderful Invention"). In its early stenographic uses, the phonograph offered a means of commercial correspondence. But Edison cylinder recordings of Alfred, Lord Tennyson, Robert Browning, and Mark Twain reading or reciting their work helped turn the technology, through its association with the authorial voice, into an auratic end in itself. From the mid-1880s on, the phonograph also cropped up as a prized diegetic object in works of fiction by Edward Bellamy, Arthur Conan Doyle, Jules Verne, Bram Stoker, and others.² As Ivan Kreilkamp has shown, the device haunts Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1898), in whose play with disembodied speech it is nowhere

named but everywhere implied. And in a number of celebrated modernist works—James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922), T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), Thomas Mann’s *The Magic Mountain* (1924), William Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying* (1930), Virginia Woolf’s *Between the Acts* (1941), and Ralph Ellison’s *The Invisible Man* (1952)—we find prominent phonographs wired tightly into the texts’ formal self-conceptions. No wonder modernist studies has been quick to appoint phonography its cardinal regime of sound recording, storage, and playback—and to find implicit in the gramophone not just the audiobook but the book, period.

This interest in analog sound reproduction has produced a wealth of absorbing scholarship. Some of it views the gramophone as a death-bringing object against which modernism “embraces the audience, the speaker, the human connection” by insisting on the superiority of live performance (Knowles 2). More often, scholars of literary phonography participate in a Derridean critique of phonocentrism, reading in the gramophone an extreme case of the voice’s detachability from speaker, body, and presence (Stewart; Kreilkamp; Scott). Or they use a text’s phonographic hardware to entrain literature into a Kittlerian discourse network—to connect “abstract meanings to real, tangible bodies, and bodies to regimes of power, information channels, and institutions” (Suárez 748; see also Rice; Sterne). In sorting them this way, I have made the Derridean and Kittlerian approaches sound discrete, even incompatible. But in fact they are powerfully allied, for media histories of phonography receive categorical heft from a deconstructive speech-writing analytic they in turn endow with historical depth. The gramophone is not only the primary site of this improbable alliance but also, by now, its sign—the technology that millennial scholars of sound and literature would have needed to invent had it never existed.

What I am calling our gramophone problem arises from the success of this rapproche-

ment: in amplifying one technology of sound reproduction, it has effectively muted the rival and neighboring regimes in relation to which phonography emerged and was defined.³ This silencing oversimplifies at least two stories: our account of the discourse networks of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and our history of the period’s literary soundscapes. Stripped of its competitor and tributary technologies and thus of its contingencies, phonography gets configured as the unavoidable route to the sonic present, its history narrated from that present’s vantage—narrated, too, through the speech-writing dialectic native to phonography rather than through exogenous terms that could produce a different account. While this dialectic holds sway, even the most historically inclined students of the connections between sound recording and the literary text will tend to understand phonography as either asserting the primacy of speech over writing or exposing speech’s ineliminable ties to difference, delay, absence, and partiality. But this opposition will underwrite a profounder collusion: as long as the celebrants and the critics of phonocentrism remain inside the speech-writing complex, they will continue to sustain a deepening regime of *gramophonocentrism*.

This article offsets the gramophone problem by drawing attention to a technological assemblage that was roughly coeval with phonography, developing alongside it in mixed relations of rivalry, symbiosis, intimacy, and indifference, an assemblage whose elements have become variously extinct, exotic, and ubiquitous. I refer to the player piano, or pianola, a pneumatic playback instrument whose bellows were operated by a human “pianolist” pumping two foot pedals or by an electric motor and whose approach to recording, storing, and replaying sound contrasts with phonography’s. Where Edison’s analog device physically cut sonic vibrations into hard storage materials, the pianola transcribed the mechanical elements of a keyboard performance into a

binary machine language encoded in perforations on a paper roll. Phonographic playback involved acoustic amplification and varied modestly from one machine to the next; the pianola's pneumatic system translated binary code back into mechanical-acoustic events subject to the idiosyncrasies of the playback instrument and capable of being significantly altered by the pianolist through expressive pedaling, transposition controls, and manual levers affecting tempo and dynamics.

As against the purely analog phonograph, the player piano was a binary-analog hybrid, allowing for greater interactivity even as the sight and sound of the instrument "playing itself" were at least as uncanny as the phonograph's disembodied voice. Although it used its pneumatic lungs to replicate the work of fingers—to play rather than to reproduce singing or speech—the pianola was dissevered neither from the voice nor from the mark: piano rolls were crisscrossed with multiple forms of writing unique to the medium, including the perforations that activated individual notes, inked tempo and dynamics instructions for the operator, and song lyrics for the benefit of singers. The pianola was proto-karaoke: not an acoustic capture of a single vocal performance for later listening but a spur to participatory singing, a song prompter whose disorienting bottom-to-top manner of lyric scanning continues to fascinate poets and visual artists.⁴ And this is to speak only of the instrument's more technical and material aspects. There will be more to say about its cultural ambidexterity as a durable good for brothel and living room, dance hall and concert hall; its gendering work as prop and stage for a certain model of bourgeois femininity; its play with aura and distance in being able to reproduce, with greater and greater fidelity, the nuanced pianism of great performers; its debatable effects on piano pedagogy and amateur music; and its way of alternately vexing and materializing the recording, storage, and playback technology we call the novel.

It might seem too soon to rescue the player piano, which can still be heard in recordings and seen in the odd home or pizza parlor. But if the pianola remains in sight, its strangeness has gone into hiding: for most it is a curiosity unworthy of attention, while those who do attend to it, whether as boosters or detractors, have tended to do so in reductive or emblematic terms.⁵ Some of the most vehement haters have been postwar novelists. In *Player Piano* (1952), his first novel, Kurt Vonnegut made the instrument the master emblem for a dystopia of automation. William Gaddis nursed a pianola obsession for over five decades, pursuing the instrument through *The Recognitions* (1955), *J R* (1975), and the posthumously published *Agapē Agape* (2002), whose original subtitle was "A Secret History of the Player Piano."⁶ Although Gaddis was more engaged than Vonnegut with the pianola's development and cultural history, he too finally saw it as epitomizing technology's rationalizing energies. Both writers were extending a strand of antimechanical modernism that we can trace back at least to Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907), in whose Silenus beer hall a clangorous pianola is an omen of the "perfect detonator" imagined by the book's resident nihilist, the Professor (93). Meanwhile, the player piano's most original and influential later-twentieth-century proponents, the composers Conlon Nancarrow and György Ligeti, praised the instrument's ability to exceed the precision, speed, and dexterity of human performers, embracing the very aspects of the device that chilled its disparagers. The pianola has thus been difficult to keep in focus as a specific series of assemblages, tending to congeal into an ahistorical emblem of dehumanizing mechanization or superhuman capacity. The instrument's susceptibility to allegory is part of the cultural history with which we will need to come to terms. I propose to do this by resubjecting this frozen iconicity to the instrument's technological and cultural particulars, at the same time reentangling

them with a cultural history of phonography that has become all too discrete. The idea is not to replace one technology—much less one technological determinism—with another. Quite the contrary: it is to restore some lost complexity to the sound-capture, -storage, and -playback universe to which twentieth-century literary works often turned in testing and revising their self-concepts.

Against Ulysses Gramophone

As a way of weakening our gramphonocentrism, I would like, a little perversely, to pay more attention to a particular gramophone: the one Derrida theorizes in “Ulysses Gramophone: Hear Say Yes in Joyce,” which he delivered as the opening address of the 1984 International James Joyce Symposium in Frankfurt and subsequently published.⁷ Thirty years on, Derrida’s essay has become a touchstone for studies of sonic modernity, its identification of a “gramophone effect” in Joyce’s novel licensing the argument that literature might do more than represent sound-reproduction media, might imitate, even adumbrate, the gramophone’s grasp of speech as inscription (276).⁸ Without exhaustively re-reading “Ulysses Gramophone,” I suggest that one price of its touchstone status has been a loss in the essay’s argumentative bandwidth—a loss, specifically, of Derrida’s critique of the often cited gramophone effect. Far from simply promoting the gramophone as an emblem of a triumphant antiphonocentrism, Derrida invokes it, too, as shorthand for a totalizing drive in *Ulysses* to archive all knowledge as well as to preempt all future discourse about itself. Gramphony in this sense, implicitly a form of *graphomania*, indexes “a yes-laughter of encircling reappropriation, of omnipotent Odyssean recapitulation,” an ungenuous laughter in contrast to which Derrida celebrates “the yes-laughter of a gift without debt, light affirmation, almost amnesic, of a gift or an abandoned event” (294). Although

he insists on the inseparability of these two laughs—the yes of memory and the yes of affirmation—Derrida implicitly charges his audience to listen more closely to the latter: to attend to Joyce’s work less as a “machine of filiation” grounded in professional competence than as a rebuke to competence whose preemptive energies are “joyfully dispersed in a multiplicity of unique yet numberless sendings” (294, 304). Understood along these lines, “Ulysses Gramophone” might as accurately be titled “Against Ulysses Gramophone.”

Despite its frequent conscription by scholars of literature and sound media, Derrida’s essay is not occupied with the kinds of technological and historicist questions that most concern those scholars. It spends little time with the famous gramophone passage in *Ulysses*’s “Hades” episode, less with the machine’s reappearance in “Circe,” and none unfolding the history of phonography or its engagement by Joyce’s work. In fact, Derrida’s gramophone is less acoustic playback device than computer, “programphoned” (283), a preprogrammable archive, a “hypermnestic machine” (281). The gramophone effect in Joyce’s work takes shape as “the most powerful project for programming over the centuries the totality of research in the onto-logico-encyclopedia field,” and its author “has at his command the computer of all memory” (281). Having figured *Ulysses* as a gramphonic computer, Derrida imagines Joyce studies as a computer of the same kind: a remotely searchable compendium of all of Joyce’s works and their critical commentaries, ready for infinite queries, operating only in English and with a United States patent (286). But the computer is not only a figure for *Ulysses*’s encyclopedic conceit, or a device for twitting American Joyceans for their monolingualism. The essay closes with a fantasia about a second machine, an “*n*th generation computer that would be up to the task” of testing Derrida’s reading of the yes in Joyce. This imaginary device would at once fulfill

and explode the dream of competence; it would typologize, in all languages, the yeses of the text while also working against typology by understanding how yes eludes meta-language; and it would trace the interplay of the two yes laughs without presuming to separate them through reductive binarisms, instead attending to their doubling, their mutual countersigning, their forming, together, a vibration. “I hear this vibration,” Derrida writes, nearing the end, “as the very music of *Ulysses*. A computer cannot today enumerate these interlacings, in spite of all the many ways it can help us out. Only an as yet unheard-of computer could, by attempting to integrate with it, and therefore by adding to it its own score, its other language and its other writing, respond to that in *Ulysses*” (308).

Two computers: a present-day one that materializes the Joyce industry’s completism and competence fetish (its gramophone effect) and a future device that would respond uniquely and unforeseeably to what is unique in *Ulysses* (the very music of *Ulysses*) instead of subjecting the text indiscriminately to a string of preset operations. Were Derrida of the party of Conrad, Vonnegut, and Gaddis, he would have named the bad computer after the player piano, that emblem of deadening mechanization. But the pianola goes unmentioned by Derrida, despite playing as prominent a role in *Ulysses* as the gramophone. Nevertheless, an essay that names the gramophone without dwelling on it can be understood to dream of, without naming, the pianola: a device whose “computer reading-head” registers the music of *Ulysses* by adding to it its own score (307)—an assemblage comprising a scrolling code, a given instrument with unique timbres, a singer or singers, and the inimitable acoustics of a room. In exceeding its own binarity—in quantizing music without dematerializing it, in subjecting the purity of its signal to the noise and risk of multiple contingencies—the pianola instantiates the yes of affirmation, dispersing

a single recording “in a multiplicity of unique yet numberless sendings.” It enables playback while soliciting song.

To read “*Ulysses Gramophone*” as a critique of what Derrida calls the gramophone effect is not to level the same critique at scholars of literary phonography, even those who cite Derrida’s essay as a warrant for their work. No one who studies the phonograph would draw a straight line between its particular technological and cultural capacities and the abstract work Derrida has it do in “*Ulysses Gramophone*.” But to weaken the affirmative bond between those terms—to insist that the essay neither equates *Ulysses* with a gramophone nor posits the device as the novel’s logo or coat of arms, that it rather resists such identifications—allows us to consider what ways of reading *Ulysses* might emerge from Derrida’s critique of gramophonocentrism. How might we approach the problems of recording, storage, and playback in Joyce’s book without deepening the rut of the speech-writing binarism? If, as I have argued, Derrida’s essay subjects the gramophone it names to a haunting by the pianola it does not, what alternative portrait of the novel might appear under the sign of that spectral instrument, with its self-depressing keys?⁹ And what uninvited guest might come to occupy the player piano’s empty bench?

Mechanical Music Makers

So far I have pitted the gramophone and the pianola against each other, in part because, as we will shortly see, the “*Circe*” episode in Joyce’s novel stages a kind of duel between them. But the gramophone and the pianola were, if not born together, at least reared in adjacent nurseries. As the two media emerged, they were often spoken of in a single breath—“linked,” says the historian David Suisman, “as two aspects of a single phenomenon” (17). The United States Copyright Act of 1909, he reminds us, handled them under

a single legal device, the new compulsory mechanical license, which permitted the creation of “mechanical reproductions” (as distinct from copies) for a preset royalty, without the consent of the copyright owner. Writing during the debates that led up to the 1909 act, the composer John Philip Sousa also lumped the phonograph and the player piano together as “mechanical reproducing machines” in deploring their effect on amateur musicianship. Not least that of American girls: “let the mechanical music-maker be generally introduced into the homes; hour for hour these same girls will listen to the machine’s performance and, sure as can be, lose finally all interest in technical study.” A single-technology view of the phonograph or the pianola misses how they were paired, even conflated, by copyright law and by those who saw “the mechanical music-maker” as a unified regime posing one dire threat to amateur music. And another threat to a musically interpolated model of femininity: the girl who would rather listen to a player piano than practice her scales would have her counterpart in the phonograph-wielding mother at bedtime. As Sousa asks, “[W]ill she croon her baby to sleep with sweet lullabys, or will the infant be put to sleep by machinery?” (281).

I will consider, below, how *Ulysses* replicates and travesties the pianola’s staging of gender. But before turning to Joyce’s novel, we should dwell on the piano itself for a moment, to prize it apart from its automation and to ask why a novel might find one of its self-concepts in a *player* piano as opposed to the standard instrument. To call the pianola a mechanized piano is to imply that the piano alone is not already mechanical. But, as Suisman again reminds us, the modern pianoforte results from centuries of Western keyboard-instrument development crossed with nineteenth-century industrial manufacturing. Not an incursion of mechanism, the pianola is an intensification of it. This realization helps dispel any organic fantasies about the

standard piano, making it visible as already extravagantly mechanical. We might think of the player piano as a reading of the piano—or, equally, as the piano’s metafictional turn: as materializing the piano’s self-understanding as mechanism. Among the things it underscores is the standard piano’s conscription of a human player less as an agent of self-expression than as a part of the instrument’s sound-reproduction mechanism. Classical players, in particular, spend years developing disciplined techniques, often involving repetitive biomechanical reflex conditioning, in order to execute pieces in the manner designated by the composer. As Suisman puts it, “[T]he point of the player’s labor was, just as it would be later with increasingly mechanized technologies, reproduction of sounds determined earlier, by someone else” (21–22); in other words, the alpha version of the player piano was the classical pianist. This sounds darkly Foucauldian, but it might prompt us to reconsider Sousa’s deploration over amateur music’s death at the hands of mechanical music makers. Say for the sake of argument that the “technical study” of the piano, even for nonprofessionals, required the acquisition of competence (to use Derrida’s word) through numbing, strenuous, repetitive discipline. Perhaps then the pianola, long accused of dehumanizing musical expression, should be reclaimed as an emancipatory technology: as a device to root out routinization. This would be to find the pianola’s reflexive turn exposing as fake the organicism that surrounds the standard instrument—to find metafiction publishing the hidden regimens of fiction.

Ulysses’s Pianola

The pianola makes its appearance late in Joyce’s book, in the hallucinatory “Circe” episode, written in the form of a dramatic script. Leopold Bloom has followed the inebriated Stephen Dedalus and his friend Lynch into Dublin’s red-light district, where they have

entered a brothel run by Bella Cohen. There, through an open window, the Yorkshire-born sex worker Zoe hears a group of people in the street singing “My Girl’s a Yorkshire Girl”:

ZOE

That’s me. (*she claps her hands.*) Dance! Dance!
(*she runs to the pianola.*) Who has twopence?

BLOOM

Who’ll . . . ?

LYNCH

(*handing her coins.*) Here. . .

ZOE

(*turns the drumhandle.*) There.

(*She drops two pennies in the slot. Gold, pink and violet lights start forth. The drum turns purring in low hesitation waltz. Professor Goodwin, in a bowknotted periwig, in court dress, wearing a stained Inverness cape, bent in two from incredible age, totters across the room, his hands fluttering. He sits tinily on the pianostool and lifts and beats handless sticks of arms on the keyboard, nodding with damsel’s grace, his bowknot bobbing.*)

(468–69; 15.4004–22; 1st ellipsis in orig.)

The table is pushed to one side so that Stephen and Zoe can dance as Bloom looks on.

(*The prelude ceases. Professor Goodwin, beating vague arms, shrivels, shrinks, his live cape falling about the stool. The air in firmer waltz time sounds. Stephen and Zoe circle freely. The lights change, glow, fade gold rosy violet.*)

THE PIANOLA

Two young fellows were talking about
their girls, girls, girls,
Sweethearts they’d left behind

(469; 15.4047–53)

The pianola continues to speak or sing the words to the song, as if it were part gramophone. As the dancers whirl with greater abandon, the stage directions mime their dip and spin. An apparition of Stephen’s father, Simon, says, “Think of your mother’s people!” to which Stephen responds, “Dance of death”

(472; 15.4137–39). There follows a long paragraph in which the lyrics of the pianola’s song are interspersed with references to earlier episodes in the novel; at the end of this, a vision of Stephen’s dead mother rises through the floor, precipitating one of the episode’s crises.

Pianola, like *zipper*, *thermos*, and *heroin* (and, for that matter, *gramophone* and *phonograph*), is a proprietary eponym—a term that started out as a brand name but became a generic, in this case for any player piano. So we will not expect to be able to identify the specific instrument in “Circe.” Instead, in accord with the episode’s dream logic of condensation, what we find is a conflation of several discrete machines, a synchronic capsule history of the player piano. As if in answer to Bloom’s asking, “Who’ll . . . ?” (play the piano, presumably), Professor Goodwin, Molly Bloom’s former accompanist, now retired, appears. His age and the “handless sticks of arms” he lifts and beats on the keyboard make him an anthropomorphic version of the Aeolian piano player, or “push-up player” (fig. 1), a separate device that was wheeled up to a regular piano until its sixty-five leather-covered fingers were positioned over the corresponding keys. But earlier in the episode Bloom had heard piano playing from the street—“A man’s touch. Sad music. Church music” (387; 15.1278)—and, thinking the touch might be Stephen’s, had asked Zoe whether Stephen was inside. Once he enters the music room eight hundred lines later, Bloom indeed finds Stephen standing at the instrument—“with two fingers [repeating] once more a series of empty fifths” (410; 15.2072–73). The accessibility of the keyboard here implies not a push-up player but an “inner player” (fig. 2), an upright piano with the pneumatic and mechanical stack of the push-up player built into its cabinet. These instruments first appeared in the late 1890s, which squares with Zoe’s asking Bloom, in the wee hours of the novel’s 16 June 1904 setting, “Are you coming into the music room to see our new pianola?” (408;



FIG. 1

Ad for a push-up pianola.

15.1990–91). But the fact that Zoe can select a particular tune by “turn[ing] the drumhandle” indicates an instrument with a sophisticated device permitting multiple rolls, such as Wurlitzer’s Automatic Music Roll Changer (fig. 3). These precursors of the jukebox would have been installed in coin-operated instruments such as the Wurlitzer IX (fig. 4), whose electrified motor relieved humans of having to pump and whose backlit art-glass front could have supplied those fairground-like “gold, pink and violet lights” that start forth. Machines like this did not appear until 1910 at the earliest, but such anachronisms should

not surprise us much given that the song “My Girl’s a Yorkshire Girl” was not published until 1908, four years after the novel’s action. In *Ulysses*’s Homeric intertext, Circe can see the future. What would have been chronological howlers in other episodes seem commensurate with the porous temporality of Joyce’s “Circe.”

Looking closely at the ad for the Automatic Music Roll Changer, we see the menu “Classical, Opera, Songs, Dances, or the National Airs,” indicating the broad variety of musical genres available as pianola rolls. A playback machine with easily exchanged rolls could play almost any kind of music and



FIG. 2

Ad for an inner player (*Everybody's Magazine*, 1900).

The PIANOLA PIANO

The Piano That Has Revolutionized an Entire Industry

TO have produced an article which has had the effect of revolutionizing an entire industry—an industry that has been *in existence for several centuries*—is an achievement of the deepest significance.

The reason for the PIANOLA PIANO'S conspicuous success is two-fold:

First: It gives everyone the coveted ability of *personally producing music*.

Second: The quality of this music is *Artistic*—so much so as to have won the endorsement of practically every noted musician living today.

The position now held by the PIANOLA PIANO in the world of music, is such that no intending piano purchaser can safely make a selection without first investigating and carefully weighing the remarkable claims that this Twentieth Century instrument has upon his consideration.

Send for Book K of the Pianola Piano

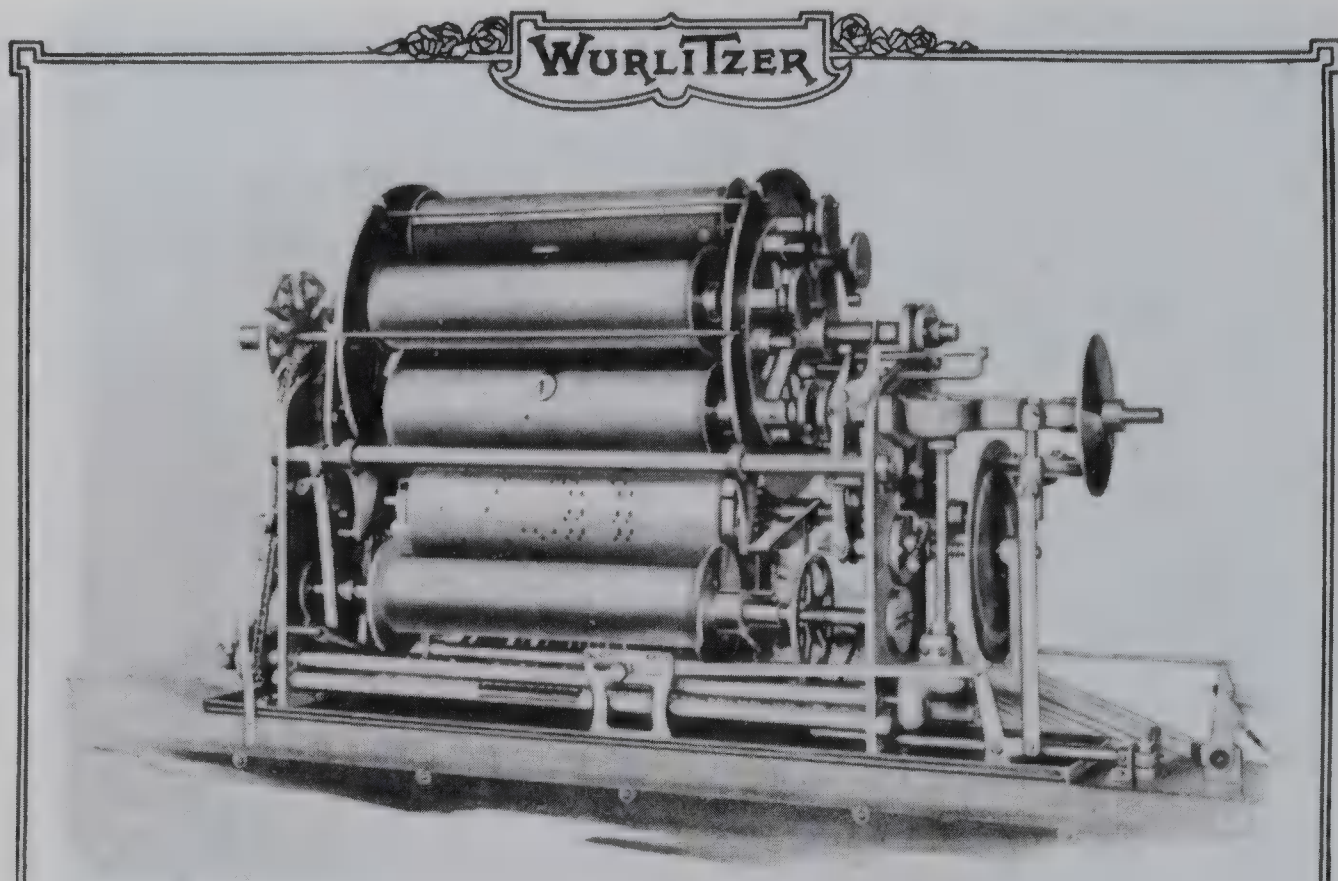
THE AEOLIAN COMPANY

Aeolian Hall, 362 Fifth Ave.

NEW YORK

FIG. 3

Ad for the
Wurlitzer Auto-
matic Music
Roll Changer.



The WURLITZER Automatic Music Roll Changer

Makes it possible for a Wurlitzer Instrument to play as many as 30 different selections without change or attention.

Another Special Feature of the Roll Changer being that the customer may select the roll of his choice and play any character of music.

**Classical, Opera, Songs
Dances, or the National Airs**

There are 6 different rolls playing five tunes each, and all 6 rolls are inserted at one time.

The entire set of rolls may be played through, one after the other, without any attention whatsoever or individual rolls may be selected. This means a musical program of an hour and a half to three hours' duration, without repetition and without bother.

The WURLITZER Automatic Roll Changer has been pronounced a marvel of mechanical ingenuity and effectiveness. We have been at work on it for many years, knowing that when perfected it would revolutionize the automatic musical instrument business and place the WURLITZER instruments so far beyond other makes that all comparisons would cease.

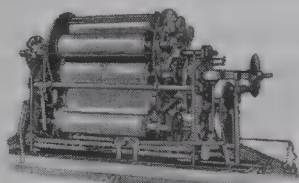
There is nothing to compare with the WURLITZER Music Roll Changer, and there can never be anything at all like it, for every feature and part is fully covered by patents that have been taken out both in the United States and foreign countries.

Spools for rolls are adjustable insuring perfect tracking.

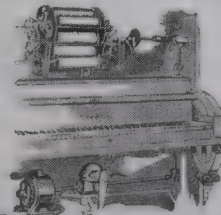
FIG. 4

Flyer for the
Wurlitzer IX.

Exclusive WURLITZER Features



WURLITZER Private Patents

Here Are
Your ProspectsBarber
Shops

Groceries

Cafes

Summer
ParksPleasure
BoatsWaiting
StationsRailroad
StationsEverywhere
that People
GatherHere Are
Your Prospects

Billiard Hall

Confec-
tioneriesBowling
AlleysShine
Parlors

Drug Stores

Moving
Picture
Theatres

Restaurants

Hotels

Novelty
Stores

Cigar Stores

Here is the Big Money-Maker

The bright, cheery Gay Music of this style IX Musical Instrument will attract crowds. The crowds will increase the cash receipts of your customers. This is the modern up-to-date wonder. These are its exclusive advantages. Only the Wurlitzer Musical Instrument has the "Roll Changer" that has SIX SEPARATE ROLLS of music with FIVE TUNES TO EACH ROLL. Thirty distinct popular melodies. The patrons are enabled by a device to select their style of music, just what they want; Ragtime, Classic, Jazz, or Hawaiian Tunes. The "Roll Changer" is at the top of the Piano, very easy to attend, no unpleasant stooping on the knees required. Our DIRECT SHAFT DRIVE does NOT stretch nor break like the animal belting on other makes of Electric Pianos. A big Saving in Time and Expense itself. Gives absolutely perfect tempo for dancing. You do not need to sell these Wurlitzer Wonders. THEY SELL THEMSELVES. All you need to do is deliver the instrument and collect the money.

Send for Special Dealer's Offer

Make More Profits at Less Worry and Expense

Mail in the enclosed card for our SPECIAL DEALER'S OFFER now. There is a limit to the time to establish new dealers and the number we want. Don't Wait. Mail the card now. No obligation. We have a proposition on which you CAN make more money. This is indeed a rare opportunity. Your bank book can be full of money and your heart full of appreciation of your wise decision. Will you miss the chance to Make Real Money. You can wait too long. Decide now.

Send Card Now—Don't Wait!

The Rudolph Wurlitzer Company

121 E. Fourth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio

consequently be marketed for a wide range of commercial, public, and domestic uses. But this flexibility also made the player piano unstable as a cultural marker. By the turn of the century, the instrument's ability to pump out popular tunes had made it a fixture in bars, dance halls, penny arcades, and brothels. Yet in these settings it signified a certain classiness: the machines were expensive—even the Aeolian push-up player sold for £65 at the turn of the century—so the pianola sitting in Bella Cohen's music room would have conveyed her establishment's prosperity, its aspiration to gentrify and thus facilitate sex work through the maintenance of an upscale, bourgeois, and implicitly metropolitan backdrop. Witness the scolding Bella gives Stephen: "This isn't a musical peepshow. And don't you smash that piano. Who's paying here?" (453; 15.3528–29). We should notice that the madam's demand for payment and Stephen's compliance with her demand take place while he is still seated at the pianola, an instrument that allowed male clients to purchase performances of the sort of music they might, in their daylight lives, hear played for free by middle-class women in domestic parlors. Thus, when Zoe asks Bloom whether he is "coming [in] to see our new pianola," she is speaking literally but also euphemistically, inviting him to come put a few pence down the slot in exchange for the sort of music he is not, as he is painfully aware on this day in June, being offered at home. Bella Cohen's coin-operated pianola is not just in a brothel; it metonymizes the brothel.

Even as it gave a respectable gloss to the brothel, the pianola could bring an unwelcome whiff of the brothel into the home. But nothing cleanses like classicism, as the author of *Ulysses* knew well. Paul Vanderham has argued that after the book was declared obscene in the United States in 1921, Joyce tried to sanitize its reputation by enhancing and publicizing the Homeric correspondences he had built into it. The pianola industry had played a similar game for decades, giving in-

struments names like Aeolian, Juno, Apollo, Venus, Mars, Helios, Orpheus, Pan, Minerva, Phaedra, Erato, Daimonion, and Nero. (The Leipzig firm of Popper produced an orchestra called the Circe.) Endorsements by composers, virtuosos, American millionaires, and even the king of England further bolstered the pianola's upmarket cred; this was made still more robust by the arrival in 1904 of the more sophisticated "reproducing" pianola, which, by duplicating a performer's expressive shadings, could put performances by Hofmann, Paderewski, Rachmaninoff, and other greats in one's living room. It could put them on the concert stage too, and on several occasions the instrument was the featured soloist in a major orchestra's performance of a piano concerto.

These testimonials may seem to take us far from sex and the marketplace; after all, they were intended to do so. But the reproducing pianola's association with famous concert pianists was partly aimed at selling instruments to women, specifically to young women either ungifted with or uninterested in acquiring conventional pianistic ability, that key index of middle-class marriageability at a time when women played most of the keyboards in middle-class homes (Kallberg 35–36). Advertisers and other defenders of the pianola claimed that the instrument enabled such women to get back in the game, even to outshine their unassisted rivals insofar as the player piano allowed them to "perform" pieces of virtuosic difficulty.¹⁰ Yet while relying on the difference between male virtuoso and female aficionado, the integrated playback system of woman, pianola, and perforated roll presented the gentleman caller with a stranger complex of relations—sexually, informatically, and industrially—to realize which we have only to picture a female pianolist seated at the instrument, her face flushed with effort as she rhythmically pumps out florid arpeggios encoded in paper rolls cut in factories, often by working-class women her own age, from a virtuosic original. The

pianola at once exposed and hypercompensated for its user's lack of musicianship, giving her a limited dominion over maestros and tempos through her interaction with a flatteringly expensive, state-of-the-art instrument dependent on her exertions for its celebrated "self-play." A cartoon in the *Saturday Evening Post* captures these functions of the instrument (fig. 5): a young woman is seated at the pianola in a posh drawing room, her calves, ankles, and high heels in view on the pedals, her back arched with the effort of looking statuesque while pedaling. Her mother, Mrs. Neurich (read "nouveau riche"), says to a friend, "Yes, my daughter has a great foot for music."¹¹ Even ads that tried harder to secure the pianola's identity as a cultural hearth for the angel of the house were organized around her availability and the visibility that implied it. To look at a pianola was to look at a woman playing the pianola; indeed, it could be difficult to know which was accessory to which.

Pianola versus Gramophone

I suggested earlier that "Circe" configures its pianola as a brothel in miniature, a tiny emporium where what passes for a gift in the bourgeois domestic sphere is peddled even as the peddler aspires to membership in that more genteel world. One might expect *Ulysses*, concerned as its author was to rescue his book from charges of obscenity, to avoid any metonymic chains that might link it to sex work. But instead the novel seems to declare a kind of allegiance, even a kinship, to the pianola in Cohen's ten-shilling house. I have already touched on some of these kinships between book and instrument—their tense and productive juxtaposition of high and mass culture, their shared deployment of the classical as an alibi, if often a botched or bad-faith one, for charges of obscenity. Here I turn to the pneumatics of the player piano, particularly in contrast to what *Ulysses* presents as its rival sound-reproduction technology, the



DRAWN BY R. B. FULLER

Mrs. Neurich — "Yes, My Daughter Has a Great Foot for Music"

FIG. 5

Cartoon (*Saturday Evening Post*, 1921).

gramophone.¹² As we have seen, the latter device was touted as a form of sound writing so faithful as to resurrect the dead acoustically. But the emphasis in *Ulysses*'s treatment of the gramophone is not on its fidelity but on that fidelity's limits. Earlier in the day, Bloom is walking through Prospect Cemetery, in Glasnevin, after attending a friend's burial there. Surveying the sea of grave markers, he thinks, "How many! All these here once walked round Dublin." This becomes a meditation on technologies for remembering the dead:

Besides how could you remember everybody? Eyes, walk, voice. Well, the voice, yes: gramophone. Have a gramophone in every grave or keep it in the house. After dinner on a Sunday. Put on poor old greatgrandfather. Kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullygladaseeagain hellohello amawf krpthsth. Remind you of the voice like the photograph reminds you of the face. (93; 6.962–67)

The passage is an homage not to signal but to noise—to what Tim Armstrong calls the "scratchy, dim, and shortwinded infancy" of shellac (3)—even as it asserts *Ulysses*'s superiority as a sound-recording medium with its bravura transliteration of the needle's being set down on the record ("Kraahraark") and sizzling in the run-out groove ("krpthsth"). When another gramophone appears in "Circe," rearing "a battered brazen trunk" in the window of a rival brothel, the emphasis is again on noise (368; 15.605–06). Interrupting the intervals Stephen plays on the pianola, it "*begins to blare* The Holy City," drowning out even the American evangelist summoned by the lyrics of the song and eliciting cries of pain from listeners with its shrill final phrases: "Whorusalaminyourhighhohhhh . . . (*the disc rasps gratingly against the needle*)" (412, 414; 15.2115, 2210–12; ellipsis in orig.). And when Bloom's just-buried friend Dignam appears elsewhere in the episode as Nipper, the iconic Victrola dog, he holds his ear not to the gramophone but to the ground

as he adapts the famous words: "My master's voice!" (386; 15.1247).

Introduced in passages that alternate with or parallel those about the gramophone, the pianola supersedes it as the episode's favored mode of acoustical resurrection: from beneath the instrument's "coffin lid," Father Dolan and Father Conmee, priests at the Jesuit school Stephen attended as a child, emerge and deliver undistorted utterances—"Any boy want flogging? Broke his glasses? Lazy idle little schemer"—that reprise scenes in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (458; 15.3671). Whereas the gramophone is bested by the more sensitive recording technology of *Ulysses*'s prose, the pianola materializes the novel's ability to store and replay passages from Joyce's other works and from its own earlier pages. Incarnating *Ulysses*'s status as a "hypermnesic machine," in Derrida's phrase, the pianola presides over what may be the book's most densely retentive and formally daring passage:

(. . . *With clang tinkle boomhammer tallyho hornblower blue green yellow flashes Toft's cumbersome turns with hobbyhorse riders from gilded snakes dangled, bowels fandango leaping spurn soil foot and fall again. . . . Closeclutched swift swifter with glareblare-flare scudding they scootlootshoot lumbering by. Baraabum! . . . Bang fresh barang bang of lacquey's bell, horse, nag, steer, piglings, Conmee on Christass, lame crutch and leg sailor in cockboat armfolded ropepulling hitching stamp hornpipe through and through. Baraabum! On nags hogs bellhorses Gadarene swine Corny in coffin steel shark stone one-handed Nelson two trickies Frauenzimmer plumstained from pram falling bawling. Gum he's a champion. Fuseblue peer from barrel rev. evensong Love on hackney jaunt Blazes blind coddoubled bicyclers Dilly with snowcake no fancy clothes. Then in last switchback lumbering up and down bump mashtub sort of viceroy and reine relish for tublumber bumpshire rose. Baraabum! . . .*) (472; 15.4125–50)

For all that it enacts the blur effects of whirligig and wheeling dancers, the passage is made up of discrete bits of language from previous episodes—mostly “Proteus,” “Aeolus,” and “Wandering Rocks”—intercut with the lyrics (which I have underlined above) to “My Girl’s a Yorkshire Girl,” all reproduced without gramphonic garbling.¹³ The excerpts from earlier pages of the novel are too brief to function as full-blown references, which would have some cognitive purchase; they are echoic in the sense of being more sonic than cognitive but without the distortion or entropic decay of echoes and without the noise that attended early analog recordings. As sonic memory traces, they are not acoustically or ambiently recorded but rather transduced, encoded, and reproduced, switched on in series, as if the book were spectrally playing itself thanks to miles of concealed tubing that linked disparate pages and could mechanically restage linguistic events across those distances. For this, again, is just how the pianola works, redefining the keyboard as an array of binary switches and the initial performance as a series of switch events stored on the paper roll. That roll, when played, allows the machine to convert the binary data back into mechanical, and thereby acoustic, events immune to bad sound engineering, warped or scratched records, needle hiss, or any of the other factors that bedevil the phonographic signal. Yes, the passage inverts word order and fuses words (“cyclist doubled up like cod in a pot,” in “Lotus Eaters” [70; 5.551–52], becomes the single word “coddoubled”), but these manipulations are the hallmark of a storage system that can maintain discrete sounds in a durable, binary form without the fidelity loss of analog media—even as the acoustics of the playback instrument prevent a tediously perfect replica of the “original” performance.

None of this is to deny *Ulysses*’s fascination with the propagation and social consequences of error, decay, distortion, and

wandering. But it is to insist that for all its interest in noise, Joyce’s book is one of the least noisy ever written in its storage and reproduction of its own language. Should *Ulysses*’s pneumatics of delay (to adapt Hugh Kenner’s description of the book’s “aesthetic of delay”) seem to rely on some naive metaphysics of presence, we need only recall that its mechanical avatar, the pianola, is a theater of absence, a machine engineered to be haunted by as many phantom ivory ticklers as possible. This is an instrument in which the presence of a sound is triggered by a hole—by a perforation breaking a particular note’s vacuum seal as it passes over the designated port in the reading head or “tracker bar,” an instrument whose keys drop on their own, even as its operator seems possessed of and possessed by that absent pianist’s abilities. The pianolist’s *Ulysses*, we could say, decouples eventfulness from presence while insisting that absence need not entail unwittingly comic distortions like the gramophone’s; thus, the book’s precise reproduction of its own language in “Circe” seems unmotivated by something we could call a subject. The impression of perfect storage *Ulysses* gives comes to depend, in fact, on the absence of a human rememberer, as if only a hypermnesic machine could so virtuously recall and replay itself.

Yet in modeling a recording and playback decoupled from the subject, Joyce’s novel does not detach those operations from their social and material moorings. As we have seen, the book takes pains to locate its pneumatic-mnemonic avatar not in the nonplace of abstraction but in a specific place of gendered sexual labor, mingled bodies and social classes, and potential violence. Its most granular moments of self-reference are therefore enmeshed in wayward and fungible social performances and in the ongoing threat of instrumentalized being. The device that stands for informatic fidelity stands in the house of sexual infidelity—a house, moreover, whose metonym it is. The player piano at Bella Cohen’s

does not produce a fixed and single way of constellating gender, economics, and informatics. But as much as any promise it harbors of flawless storage or noiseless signal, I take this to be the crux of *Ulysses's* pianola: that the sharpest acts of memory or performance depend for the better part of their resonance on, if you will, the particular social acoustics of a room and on the bodies—voiced, gendered, marked by history and exchange, pleasure-seeking, laboring, contending—in it. The pianola resonates because it is in the brothel.

Toward a Pneumatic Criticism

In positing a pneumatic *Ulysses*, I have wanted to shift our approach to the novel away from phonography's speech-writing binary and toward a heuristic concerned with playing, coding, and playing back: toward a playing that is not speech, a binary machine coding that is not a conventional inscription, and a playback that is not exactly reading. How, then, to address the fact that the text of "Circe" accords the pianola a speaking part? It is true that unconventional speakers—a trouser button, a gas jet, a bar of soap—are everywhere in "Circe," which turns the promiscuous ascription of speech into a technique. But the ontology of a pianola's scripted speech is distinct from a gramophone's, which is distinct from a bar of soap's. When a line from "The Holy City" or a word like "Whorusalaminyourhighhohhhh" is assigned to the gramophone, we understand those words to render sounds issuing from the instrument's horn. When Bloom's bar of soap sings, "We're a capital couple are Bloom and I," we suspend disbelief and, thanks to the wonders of commodity fetishism or of the imagination, envision it doing just that (360; 15.338). But when "Circe" attributes the lyrics of "My Girl's a Yorkshire Girl" to the pianola, we do not imagine hearing those *words* coming, as diegetic audio events, from the instrument. Rather, we are being shown at least two relations an instrumentally played melody can

have to the lyrics that go with it: the melody can summon those lyrics to the listener's mind, and it can provoke their singing. Garrett Stewart has coined the term *phonotext* to describe the silently voiced or subvocal activation of a written text produced by a reader in the course of traversing it. The phonotext is not the sound of print declaimed but what the silent reader mentally "hears," and it may track a written text closely or diverge from it, variously supplementing, multiplying, and undermining that text's semantics (27–29). We need a complementary term to describe an instrumental melody's way of implying an absent lyric text. Note that this *pianolotext* (how did you silently voice *that* word in reading it?) is not quite the obverse of the phonotext: the lyrics that a known melody prompts us to hear in our minds are activated not by speech but by instrumental playback. What is more, if we choose to sing this implied pianolotext (or its later-twentieth-century successor, the Muzaktext), what we vocalize is not the written text per se but our remembered version of it, complete with mondegreens, mumbled bits, and onomatopoeic vocalizations of hooks and instrumental flourishes ("Baraabum!"). Again, although the pianola in "Circe" indexes a hypermnestic storage medium, its playback is keyed to kinesis, recombinant phonics ("tublumber bumpshire rose"), improvisation, dispersal.

The pianola has a third, nonaural way of referring to the lyrics to the song it plays: by reproducing them in print on the paper roll for the benefit of those who sing along. Here is how two lines from the chorus of "My Girl's a Yorkshire Girl" look in "Circe" when attributed to the pianola, scanning conventionally from left to right and top to bottom:

Though she's a factory lass
And wears no fancy clothes.

(472; 15.4130–31)

Because a piano roll scrolls downward as it is wound on the take-up spool, any lyrics

printed on the roll will read from the bottom up, hyphenated and contracted to fit in the narrow right-hand section of paper space dedicated to them and placed adjacent to the perforated “notes” along with which they will be sung during playback. Here is how the same two lines might look on a piano roll:

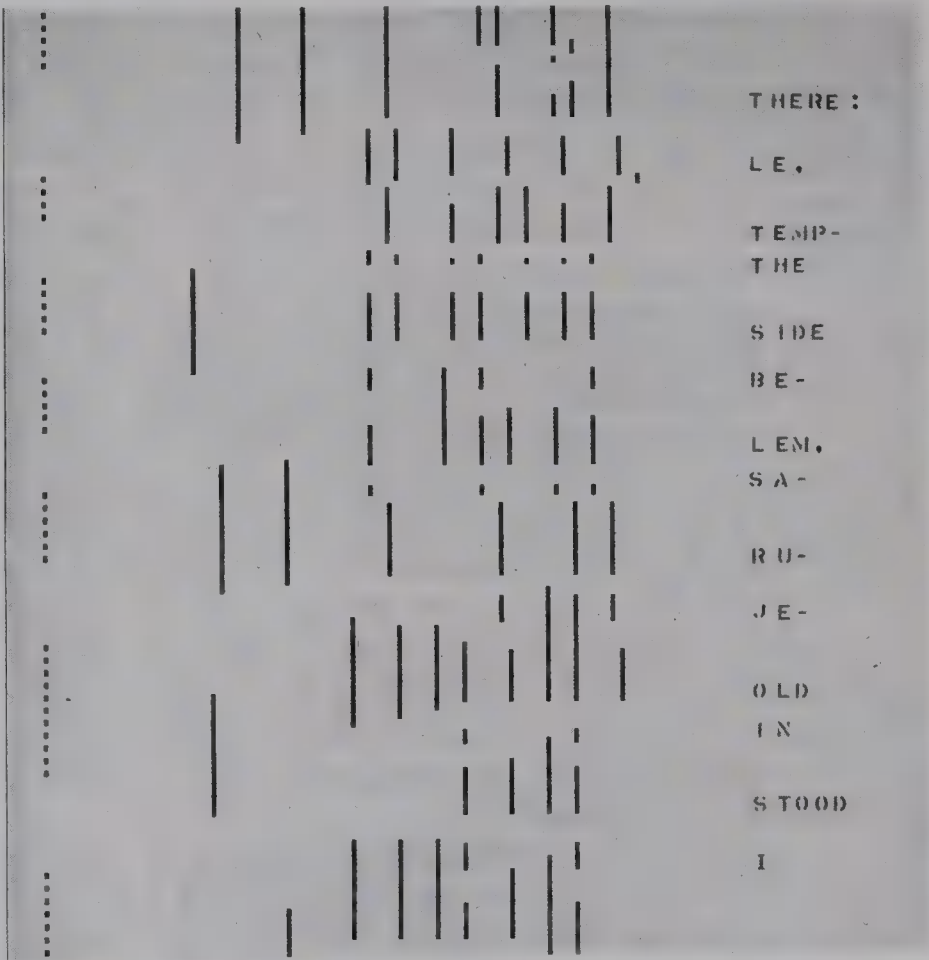
CLOTHES
CY
FAN-
NO
WEARS
AND
LASS
T’RY
FAC-
A
SHE’S
THOUGH

Or see in figure 6 how a few lines from “The Holy City,” the song the gramophone plays in “Circe,” look in the song’s piano-roll form. Not even in the radical verticality of Hope Mirrlees’s *Paris: A Poem* (1920) do we find mimicked the down-scrolling of pianola lyrics, and Erica Baum’s “The Melody Indicator” (2012), subtitled “The Player Piano as Poem,” scrolls from left to right, embedding lone panes of piano roll in a more traditional reading environment. So strong is our vertical scanning bias that the pianola lyrics’ upended directionality is all but illegible outside the specific mechanical context that made it necessary. Yet when in *Ulysses* the instrument “says” the words to “My Girl’s a Yorkshire Girl,” the conventionally scanned rendering of those words should conjure in the reader a mental image of the inverted, re-segmented text native to the piano roll—the only way a pianola has of “saying” song lyrics. In effect a

second type of pianolertext, this alternative textuality unscrolls in the mind’s eye even as the Joycean page—in this, as orthodox as can be—conspicuously effaces it.

Far from being just another vociferous object in the Nighttown episode, *Ulysses*’s pianola is a pneumatic switchboard for the novel’s aesthetic of delay, materializing models of both hypermnesis and analog scattering, of a remembering the better to disperse.¹⁴ In its extremity, the player pianism of Joyce’s book can help us approach more contained instances of novelistic metadiscourse routed through the instrument. We might return to *The Secret Agent* to trace the player piano’s juxtaposition with the Professor’s detonator (also pneumatic: an air bulb that, when squeezed, sets off explosives the character wears whenever he goes out, as a guarantee against being arrested) and with the newspapers that are so often read and discussed over the instrument’s noise. Starting and stopping without warning

FIG. 6
Section of a piano roll to “The Holy City” (1892), with lyrics on the right margin (QRS 669).



in the Silenus, Conrad's pianola is also an underexamined figure for the narrative itself, whose violent fermatas and recursions are typically read as effects of the explosion engineered by Verloc at Greenwich. The metrostyle pianola at Bladesover in H. G. Wells's *Tono-Bungay* (1909) presides over, even precipitates, George Ponderevo's affair with Beatrice Normandy. It is *The Kreutzer Sonata* that clinches things ("It is queer how Tolstoy has loaded that with suggestions, debauched it, made it a scandalous and intimate symbol" [402]), as if the pianola roll played back the adultery script of Tolstoy's 1889 novella along with the Beethoven piece after which it was named. In E. M. Forster's *Maurice* (1914; published 1971), Clive Durham and Maurice Hall remake the pianola—iconically a staging ground for feminine display and heterosexual wooing—into a site for queer courtship, playing rolls of the third and second movements of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* symphony, which the composer dedicated to a nephew with whom, we later learn, he was in love. The playback device also models plot's iterability. "A movement isn't like a separate piece—you can't repeat it," Durham responds when Maurice asks him to play the second movement again (38). Yet this claim adheres to the logic of the concert hall, not of the player piano, whose essence is repeatability, and the novel belies Durham's comment by ending in a mood more compatible with the *Pathétique*'s lively middle movements than with its dire finale.¹⁵ In all three of these instances, a diegetic pianola doubles as a narratological hub.

There are additional ways for the pneumatic critic to proceed: by tracing, as Mark Goble has done, the mediating functions of race in literary deployments of the pianola; by noting, as Maud Ellmann does in her discussion of "Circe," the instrument's proximity to the figure of the animal; by pursuing, at the intersection of artificial intelligence and the philosophy of language, Ludwig Wittgenstein's use of the pianola in *The Brown Book*

(1935–36) to exemplify a "reading machine" flexible enough to be "guided by the signs" it scans (118); by exchanging a metaphysics of voice and tone for one of code, valve, switch, pressure. We could take a cue from the pianola's hybridity by asking how the novel, in its turn, might not hew to the simple supersession of analog by digital in its self-concept or its distribution. And we might consider how literary pianolas locate the novels that contain them in the machine-code lineage that connects Joseph-Marie Jacquard's 1801 automated loom, Charles Babbage's 1837 analytic-engine design, Herman Hollerith's 1890 census tabulator, the 1929 Link flight simulator, and the early IBM and UNIVAC computers. That is, we might consider the pianola as a site where novels variously intuit, negotiate, and commemorate their fitful drift from their analog origins, beginning to conceive of themselves as programmable, as performing operations beyond capturing expression for the sake of a reader's amusement or instruction. Whatever our approaches, the point would not be to produce a pianola's-eye view of literature or to mourn a lost moment when vacuum pressure was king. Rather, we would aim to place literature in the fullest possible mediatic landscape, with all its weird materialities, its compound and parallel modes, its mutant, dormant, and resurgent forms. In one region, a technology that makes air vibrate, reproducing the voice but not the breath; in another, a way of using air to make technology vibrate, harnessing breath without reproducing the voice; and, nearby, some even unlikelier thing to take us farther still from the speech-writing complex. In recovering the variety of media forms eclipsed by triumphal single-medium histories, we would begin to recognize how currently inert elements of a work threaten or prop up or provoke literature's self-concept. And insofar as our own writing and research are historically entangled in rapidly superseded, rapidly forgotten media and informatics, we might rediscover,

too, lost octaves of critical practice, a note or two of which I have tried to sound here.

Coda

Midway through this essay, I wondered what uninvited guest might sit on the empty bench of the player piano. In “The Menace of Mechanical Music,” Sousa retells an anecdote he found in an editorial on the decline of amateur musicianship: a little boy rushes into his mother’s room and says, “O Mamma, come into the drawing-room; there is a man in there playing the piano with his hands!” (280 [fig. 7]). For Sousa and the editorial writer, the joke proves that mechanical music has become the norm for a new generation unacquainted with human instrumentalists and, by extension, with music lessons. According to this view, the pianola and the gramophone are antipedagogical, at once extinguishing the demand for human music teachers and failing to offer a viable mechanical instructor in their place. It is true that the gramophone, which produced notoriously poor recordings of the piano and could tell one nothing about the physics of the instrument, would be essentially useless as a surrogate piano teacher. But imagine the student—maybe one unable to learn from another person—who could sit alone at the pianola and, by slowing the tempo and touching the keys as they were pneumatically depressed, learn from the machine to play. Would such a student pass the pianistic Turing test? Or would he or she play detectably “like a machine,” even if the machine that had provided the lessons was celebrated for playing “like a person”? In either case, if a child—or a novel—could sit at the self-playing keyboard and learn to play, what would we need to report back to Sousa about the pedagogy of the player piano (fig. 8)? My stepfather, under whose heavy tutelage I spent my adolescence rebuilding pianolas and pianos, was such a student. The only child of two professional musicians, he had learned to play



“‘There is a man in there playing the piano with his hands!’”

by closeting himself with a player piano for thousands of hours, and his playing was, like the man himself, human—all too human.

FIG. 7

Cartoon accompanying John Philip Sousa’s “The Menace of Mechanical Music” (*Appleton’s Magazine*, 1906).

NOTES

This essay was written for a symposium at Hamilton College honoring the work of Austin Briggs. I am grateful to Eric Hayot, Joseph Lavery, Patrick Moran, and Julia Panko for their invaluable comments on drafts of the piece.

1. Thomas Edison’s phonograph, invented in 1877, played cylinders. The graphophone, a modified cylinder player patented in 1885, was developed by Alexander Graham Bell’s Volta Laboratory. Emile Berliner patented his gramophone, which played pressed discs, in 1887.

2. On Bellamy’s “With the Eyes Shut” (1889), see Gitelman, *Scripts*, ch. 2 (62–96). On the early recordings of Tennyson et al. and on the aforementioned works by Conan Doyle et al., see Picker, ch. 4 (110–45).

3. Friedrich A. Kittler’s work has been a factor in this imbalance: *Discourse Networks 1800/1900* and *Gramophone, Film, Typewriter* ruminates on phonography without mentioning the pianola. Mark Goble provides an important exception to the gramophonocentrism I describe here. In a brilliant reading of Willa Cather’s *My*

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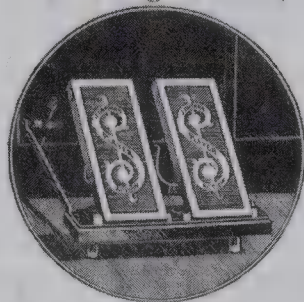
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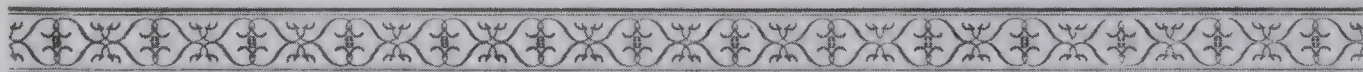
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Antonia (1918), Goble traces the novel's construction of the blind, formerly enslaved musician d'Arnault as, variously, a pianola and a phonograph. Having argued that both instruments are cognate with modernist machine aesthetics and T. S. Eliot's notion of art's "impersonality," Goble notes how frequently these aesthetic models recruited the raced figure of the African American to mediate between person and thing, animal and machine.

4. See, e.g., the work of Karen Green, who uses piano rolls as a medium for ink work and as collage components, and Erica Baum, who frames square excerpts from found piano rolls, calling attention to the semantic deformations and serendipitous lyricism produced by the rolls' bottom-up scanning. On the economic, semiotic, and legal challenges that piano rolls pose to the sheet-music paradigm of music inscription, see Gitelman, "Media."

5. This tends to be true of the few literary scholars who address the instrument. Tim Armstrong offers an excellent introduction to the literary pianola, but his use of it is finally emblematic: music, he asserts, is always already a kind of player piano insofar as it organizes and redeems entropy, crosses time, and plays and replays the melodies of human intentionality on the piano that is the body.

6. On Gaddis's player piano obsession, see Moore. Suisman addresses the construction of the player piano in Vonnegut's and Gaddis's work (25–30). Like Magome, St. Clair considers Philip K. Dick's *We Can Build You* (1962; published 1972) alongside Vonnegut's and Gaddis's novels, owing to its interest in the player piano.

7. Written and delivered predominantly in French, "Ulysse gramophone: Ouï-dire de Joyce" was first published alongside Derrida's earlier "Deux mots pour Joyce" in French in 1987.

8. E.g., Scott 100; Suárez 754; Danus 226–27n10; Rice 154–55; Knowles 4.

9. Joyce marveled at this aspect of the instrument. He and Frank Budgen were sitting in a Parisian café when a pianola started up, interrupting their talk. As Budgen tells it, "Look!" said Joyce. "That's Bella Cohen's pianola. What a fantastic effect! All the keys moving and nobody playing" (228). During the mid-1920s, Joyce attended a premiere of the pianola sections of *Ballet mécanique*, by his friend the composer George Antheil, and liked it enough to ask the pianolist to repeat a roll. The ensemble for Antheil's unfinished opera version of *Ulysses*'s "Cyclops" episode was to have featured a gramophone and sixteen synchronized pianolas (Martin 94, 98).

10. Dolan describes a 1924 story about an unmusical young woman whose marriage was saved by the purchase of a pianola: it enriched her education while playing music to which she and her husband could dance (112–13).

11. Proust's description of Albertine at the pianola (389–90), juxtaposed with Marcel's memory of her riding a bicycle (another commodity frequently pictured with the female figure in early ads), could be a variation on such images. For a detailed account of that scene, with

particular attention to its synaesthetic vision of the pianola as a magic lantern, see Carter 137–47.

12. In a 1920 letter to Budgen, Joyce wrote, "The whirligig movement in *Circe* is on the refrain *My Girl's a Yorkshire* etc, but to unify the action[,] the preceding *pas seul* of S[tephen] D[edalus] which I intend to balance on the gramophone of the opposite kip should be on the air of that same ditty played on Mrs Cohen's pianola with lights" (Letter 151).

13. For a fascinating genetic analysis and careful unpacking of this passage, see Hampson 158–62.

14. There are intimations of the pianola elsewhere in *Ulysses*: in "Sirens," whose overture implies that the body of the episode has already been captured by a storage-and-playback device to which the overture writer has access, and in the book's most pneumatic (or Aeolian) episode, "Aeolus," which imagines the newspaper office as a giant machine of wind and type and in which Bloom muses on the typesetter's backward reading practice.

15. I am indebted here to an online comment on the pianola scene in the 1987 film adaptation of *Maurice*: "The power of that happy ending is greatly intensified by the way the soundtrack . . . has tripped us into expecting gay tragedy instead" (exponential63).

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FIG. 8

Ad for the Standard Player Action (Saturday Evening Post, 1925).

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Federating the Modern Spirit: The 1922 Congress of Paris

MARIUS HENTEA

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ON 3 JANUARY 1922, THE PARIS ARTS DAILY *COMŒDIA* ANNOUNCED that an “International Congress for the Determination of the Directives and Defense of the Modern Spirit” (“Congrès international pour la détermination des directives et la défense de l’Esprit Moderne”) would convene that March. If the cumbersome title was off-putting, a photographic collage presented an impressive organizing committee, headed by André Breton; its six other members were the composer Georges Auric, the writers Jean Paulhan and Roger Vitrac, and the painters Robert Delaunay, Fernand Léger, and Amédée Ozenfant. Through “a detailed accounting of the present forces” making up modern art, the congress would go beyond the “current confusion” (“impressionism, symbolism, unanimism, fauvism, simultaneism, cubism, Orphism, futurism, expressionism, purism, Dada, etc.”) to create “a new intellectual family” (*Comœdia* 3 Jan. 1922: 2).¹ “[M]odernists’ who desire to participate in the congress,” it was announced, “are invited to write to the committee” (*L’intransigeant* 13 Jan. 1922: 2). A circular letter drafted by Breton clarified the congress’s agenda:

All those who in order to act do not seek cover under the tutelage of the past are invited to make themselves known. Both sides will be counted.

To set some guidelines, here are two of the many questions that the congress will examine:

Has the so-called “modern” spirit always existed?

Among the objects said to be modern, is a top hat more or less modern than a locomotive? (*L’œuvre* 17 Jan. 1922: 2)

If these questions situating the modern between Baudelaire’s dandy and the futurist train would probably not be resolved, the Parisian photography magazine *Excelsior* hoped that the congress’s “ardent

polemics” would “determine for the first time their importance” (12 Jan. 1922). Avant-garde journals like *Ma* in Hungary and *De Stijl* in the Netherlands advertised the congress, and it was rumored that Sigmund Freud, Thomas Mann, and Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, as well as delegates from Ireland and the Soviet Union, would attend the epochal event, scheduled for 30 March 1922, the day before Albert Einstein’s lecture on relativity at the Collège de France.

But the exaggerated hopes invested in the Congress of Paris (Congrès de Paris), as the conference came to be known, were soon overturned.² Tristan Tzara had initially supported Breton’s initiative, advising his Dada collaborator—they had both signed the collective tract *Dada n’est pas mort* (“Dada Is Not Dead”) in mid-December 1921—to select an organizing committee with “enough contrast and diversity that people would have confidence in it” (Letter). But as the congress’s organization advanced, the leader of Paris Dada refused any further participation, claiming that the congress would be “harmful to this search for the new, which I love too much” (Sanouillet 240). Breton responded by penning a vicious attack on this “impostor avid for fame”: “From this moment, the undersigned, members of the organizing committee, would like to draw attention to the actions of a person known for being the promoter of a ‘movement’ hailing from Zurich [*venu de Zurich*] that . . . does not respond to any contemporary reality” (*Comœdia* 7 Feb. 1922: 1). Over one hundred artists assembled at the Closerie des Lilas to condemn Breton’s ad hominem outburst. The ensuing print war featured pamphlets like Francis Picabia’s *La pomme de pins* (“The Pine Cone”), supporting the congress, and Tzara’s riposte, *Le cœur à barbe* (“The Bearded Heart”). By early April, Ozenfant told Breton that the congress could not take place in such a poisonous atmosphere.

The aborted congress is largely remembered today as the death knell of Paris Dada.

Even though debates over modernism were at the heart of the conflict—Breton presented the congress as a way of defining the “modern spirit” (*Comœdia* 3 Jan. 1922: 2) or the “modern adventure” (Draft notes), while opponents condemned it for codifying a questionable modernism—there has been no attempt to consider the congress’s broader significance to modernism studies.³ Michael North’s *Reading 1922*, which does so much to free modernism from “intellectual amber” (11), does not mention the congress, while Walter Adamson’s expansive historical survey of European modernism devotes only a few scattered lines to it (267, 271). French critics rehash Breton’s and Tzara’s vituperative personal attacks on each other but do not connect the congress to *le modernisme*, a term with limited appeal in French literary studies.⁴

These oversights are regrettable, for the nonevent of the 1922 congress shows the stakes involved in defining modernism and the avant-garde. If scholars continue to dispute the meaning of these critical concepts, it is instructive to examine a moment in modernism’s history when polemics over their meaning divided artists and aesthetic agendas. I begin by placing Paris Dada and its two main antagonists, Tzara and Breton, in context. Their conflict transcended the personal; at its heart was the link between art and politics: Breton was convinced that art had to be used in the service of the revolution, while Tzara denied that such action was possible. In the second section I discuss Breton’s plan for political action, arguing that the congress’s desire to federate the arts aligned it with an emerging corporatist current in the intellectual world. The third section proposes that Breton’s failure to include Dada in the federation he envisioned led to the congress’s downfall, and I set Breton’s xenophobic attack on Tzara in a larger history of Dada’s marginalization as a “foreign” movement. I then examine the self-consciousness of being “avant-garde” as opposed to “modernist”:

Breton attempted to turn the avant-garde into a modernist vanguard, while Tzara insisted on the self-sufficient and atheoretical nature of Dada. I conclude with some broader reflections on how the congress's failure provides a springboard for thinking about the modern as both event and lived experience.

[I]

Emerging out of Zurich's Cabaret Voltaire in 1916, Dada was a shrill cry against mass slaughter: "Our cabaret is a gesture. Every word that is spoken and sung here says at least this one thing: that this humiliating age has not succeeded in winning our respect" (Ball 61). Dismissive of the politics of the day and the culture that gave rise to it, Dada mixed genres (multilingual simultaneous poems, sound poetry, primitive masks and poetry, abstract collages) and assaulted the public in scandalous performances. It was propagated beyond Zurich largely through the efforts of the Romanian-born Tzara (né Samuel Rosenstock), who sent the review he edited, *Dada*, to leading figures in the avant-garde.

For Ezra Pound, writing in the March 1920 *Dadaphone*, Dada only came alive when it moved its operations to Paris:

DADA No 1. Quelques jeunes hommes intelligents ["Several intelligent young men"] stranded in Zurich desire correspondence with other unfortunates similarly situated in other godforsaken corners of the earth.

DADA: Bulletin 5 feb. Ils ont échappé ["They have escaped"]. They have got to Paris. *La bombe!!* (6)

If 1920 became "Dada's Golden Age," things looked grim when Tzara arrived in the French capital that January (Ribemont-Dessaignes 82). An inflation rate near thirty percent had driven the cost of living to four times the pre-war level (Singer-Kérel 136). Coal stocks were so low that railway-station clocks stopped, elevators were out of order, and public lighting

was curtailed (Mazel). During the end stages of the war, Paris had been bombarded, every third day, by Big Bertha shells; these had destroyed not only buildings and lives but also cultural vitality. Modern art was supposed to shock, but the civilian population that experienced devastation from the skies sought a *status quo ante bellum* through the comfort and familiarity of the old classics. Stringent censorship laws, still in force after the fighting stopped, meant that Dada was almost unknown in France. In the summer of 1919, fifty copies of *Dada* 4–5 were confiscated, and Adrienne Monnier, whose avant-garde bookshop later published the French edition of *Ulysses*, refused to stock Dada publications (Murat 38). Even Breton admitted that before meeting Tzara he had only "rather vague" notions of Dada (*Conversations* 40). Yet thanks to a vigorous media campaign, theatrical spectacles, public happenings, and publications such as *Bulletin Dada* and *Dadaphone*, by June 1920 Dada had become the most infamous arts movement in France.

One of the first French converts to Dada, and a key participant in its first two years of Paris events, Breton had been captivated by the explosive violence of Tzara's *Dada Manifesto* 1918. "I was genuinely enthused by your manifesto," the young medical student wrote to Tzara:

I hadn't known whom to turn to for the courage you display. It is to you that our eyes all turn today. (You do not know who I am very well. I am twenty-two years old. I believe in the genius of Rimbaud, Lautréamont, and Jarry; I dearly loved Guillaume Apollinaire; I have a deep tenderness for Reverdy. My favorite painters are Ingres, Derain; I'm very fond of Chirico's art.) I am not as naive as I seem.

(Letter [22 Jan. 1919])

This enumeration of an intellectual tradition shows the distance that separated Breton from Dada's program of "destruction." Yet Breton was convinced, and told others, that

"[w]e will live under the sign of Dada" (Auric 111). Imploring Tzara to come to Paris, he confided, "I am waiting for you, I do not wait for anything but you" (Letter [26 Dec. 1919]). When Tzara finally arrived, he was publicly unveiled at a matinee sponsored by Breton's journal *Littérature* (where he cut up a parliamentary speech by Léon Daudet, a far-right deputy and coeditor of *L'action française*, to make a Dada poem).

Tzara initially gave his blessing to the Congress of Paris, yet as its positive, almost scientific, ambitions became clearer, he withdrew his support. The tension between Breton, with his list of venerable masters, and Tzara, whose destructive rhetoric spared no one, could not be smoothed over as it had been in the past.⁵ In the summer of 1920, in a text in which he used the word *surrealist* for the first time, Breton had justified his faith in Dada by highlighting its "revision of moral values" and how it gave "the arbitrary . . . the place it deserves in the creation of works or ideas" ("Pour Dada" 208). Couching Dada in a programmatic (albeit vague) aesthetic, Breton went on to argue that an organized, united group of revolutionary artists had to bring about changes in moral values. Breton's position conflicted with Tzara's vision of Dada as spontaneity, perpetual contradiction, and disordered life. Dada politics was visceral, a standing up and shouting to be heard, loosely prefiguring Jacques Rancière's *dissensus*, politics as a "demonstration [*manifestation*] of a gap in the sensible itself" (38), which made it different from the division of aesthetic spoils, the creation of clear fault lines between competing ideologies ("Both sides will be counted") that Breton sought.

These opposing views had already surfaced at the trial of Maurice Barrès in May 1921, an event whose legacy haunted the congress. Known today for his right-wing politics and blood-and-earth fiction, at the turn of the century Barrès had entranced a generation of French youth with the "anar-

chic individualism" of his trilogy *Le culte du moi* ("The Cult of the Self" [Reynaud-Paligot 29]). One maxim from volume 2, *Un homme libre* ("A Free Man"), particularly appealed to Breton: "One must feel as much as possible by analyzing as much as possible" (19).⁶ But as the fourteen-volume *Chroniques de la Grande Guerre* ("Chronicles of the Great War") attests, Barrès turned virulently nationalistic and in the early 1920s was always on hand to remind compatriots of their duty to honor the war dead: "all higher life, all thought, all art, all of the nation," he expounded, must "transmit for centuries" the "profundity of sacrifice" of those "four sacred years" ("Le mausolée" 432–33). Breton felt deeply aggrieved: "how did the author of 'A Free Man' become the propagandist for the right-wing *Echo de Paris*?" (*Conversations* 53). Donning judge's robes, Breton organized a mock tribunal charging Barrès with an "attack against the security of the spirit" (Bonnet 24): literary value would be evaluated, an author's public responsibilities judged, and prescriptive norms issued.⁷

That this "revolutionary tribunal" (Aragon, *Projet* 105) was inimical to everything Dada stood for was not lost on Tzara, who appeared as a witness only to mock the proceedings. Asked if he would swear to tell "nothing but the truth," Tzara responded, "No." Admitting to having no knowledge of Barrès and "no confidence in justice, even if justice is done by Dada," he proceeded to tell the court, "You will agree with me, Monsieur le Président, that we're all just a bunch of bastards and so these little differences, a bigger bastard or a smaller bastard, don't matter at all" (Bonnet 38). Tzara interspersed his answers with a mixture of nonsense and Dada philosophy: "I do not know what humor is, I do not know what poetry is, I do not know what the truth is, but I say textually what I say" (43). References to language's social role—whose significance must have struck the tribunal, which was a court of rhetoric, empowered by discourse but

limited to it as well—grew in importance during Tzara's testimony. Asked to take responsibility for his own language, Tzara answered:

My words are not mine. My words are everybody else's words: I mix them very nicely into a little bouillabaisse—the outcome of chance, or of the wind that I pour over my own pettiness and the tribunal's. My deductions are nothing but the result of fugitive thoughts more or less attuned to desires, the commodities of conversation. They present no absolute interest, they are not applicable, they are not pure fancy, they just represent a little need on my part to speak out, to wander about and to complicate things. My judgments. I don't judge. I don't judge anything. I judge myself all the time and I find myself a puny, disgusting man—a little bit like Maurice, although maybe a little less. All of this is relative. (44–45)

Breton was furious with Tzara's antics, which turned the moral problem of an intellectual's public responsibilities into a Dada joke. In Breton's eyes Dada could only be salvaged through a larger social program, and throughout 1921 he pushed for greater discipline and a more coherent message. He came to believe that under Tzara's leadership Dada would always remain marginal: "For my part I realized that Dada, to recover some of its vigor, would have to renounce its growing sectarianism and reinsert itself into a larger current; that it was time to put an end to our isolationist policies" (*Conversations* 54). The avant-garde had to coalesce into a more powerful union:

I think that cubism, futurism, and Dada are not, all things considered, three distinct movements, but rather that all three are part of a more general movement whose meaning and scope are not yet fully known to us. . . . To consider cubism, futurism, and Dada in succession is to follow the flight of an idea that has now reached a certain height and is only awaiting a new impetus to continue describing the arc assigned to it. (*Lost Steps* 113)

Breton's modernist triad was problematic: Dadaists had long considered cubism a new academicism, while the cubist Section d'Or (Golden Section) in Paris had expelled Dada from its ranks; Marinetti's militarism and nationalism were unacceptable to Dada, while the futurists had little sympathy for a group that they considered to be "Germanic" plagiarizers. And this modernist soup tasted sour to Tzara: "modernism is of no interest to me. And I think that it was a mistake to say that Dadaism, cubism, and futurism rested on a common foundation. These latter two tendencies were based on an idea of intellectual or technical perfection above all, whereas Dadaism never rested on any theory and was never anything but a protest" ("Tristan Tzara" 624). Tzara objected to modernism's desire to constitute itself as "a system, a theoretical order, a complete and fertile formula for art," to borrow Albert Thibaudet's laundry list (Thibaudet 729). For Breton, though, the competing avant-gardes had to be pulled together; whatever differences existed could not be allowed to imperil the larger political and cultural goal of recharting the future course of society.

[II]

The announcement of the Congress of Paris in two ideologically different venues—*Comœdia*, a snobbish daily catering to the Parisian artistic scene, and *L'ère nouvelle*, an "organ of the allied left"—underlined the congress's inclusive goals. Participants were welcomed "without distinction of age, quality, or beliefs" into the larger program of a federated modernism: one must, the text proclaimed, "abstract oneself out of one's own ambition" and "address one's adhesion" to the modern spirit (*Comœdia* 3 Jan. 1922: 2). As Breton put it, "All those in the fields of art, science, or life itself who are now making new and dispassionate efforts are invited to participate. Before anything else, we oppose a certain kind of devotion to the past . . ." (*Comœdia* 3 Jan.

1922: 2). The forces pushing a *rappel à l'ordre* (return to order) ranged from Paul Valéry's essay "La crise de l'esprit" (1919; "The Crisis of the Mind") to Giorgio de Chirico's neoclassical turn, expounded in his essay in *Valori plastici*, "Il ritorno al mestiere" ("The Return of Craftsmanship"), to Maurice Denis's call for France to take up its historical role as "the great organizing power of the West . . . the country of order" (90).⁸ A few weeks after Breton's diagnosis of the reactionary forces in modern art and literature, the Salon des Indépendants refused two Picabia paintings; at the show itself, organized alphabetically by artists' names rather than by genre or pictorial school, an Ozenfant canvas was cut up by an outraged viewer. Infighting among "les chapelles littéraires" ("the literary chapels"), to use the title of Pierre Lasserre's 1920 book, had made it all too easy for traditionalists to gain influence.

After the revolutionary moment created by the December 1920 Congress of Tours, which resulted in the formation of the French Communist Party, Breton hoped that modern artists could agree on a working understanding of the sources of the modern spirit.⁹ In the "contemporary literary and artistic anarchy" (Beauduin 362), the congress would create "neither a league nor a party"; rather, it would lead to a new, objective understanding of the modern situation: "With the collaboration of those interested in the question all we have to do is to organize a confrontation of the new values. For the first time we can render an exact account of the contemporary forces at work and can, if necessary, specify the nature of their final product [*résultante*]" (*Comœdia* 3 Jan. 1922: 2). In Breton's talk of forces and final products, the language of the exact sciences is unmistakable, which is perhaps why an accountant offered his services to the organizing committee (Pasquier).¹⁰ Breton is not far from Louis Aragon's 1930 discussion of the "science of the modern," which would "allow for action to be certain":

"It will reveal the moving headquarters of the intellectual reflexes of an epoch. The person who possesses these will be able to act on the world like a physiologist on a dog's organs. . . . The modern is the nerve center of an epoch's consciousness: it is there that we must strike" ("Introduction" 58). If artists had long grouped themselves in salons, the expected "committee and subcommittee reports" from the Congress of Paris amounted to "a corporative spirit taking hold of the intellectual world" (Bertrand). Yet the congress was not the only such manifestation of an emerging corporatist impulse. With the "intellectual worker" becoming a discrete category (Tassy and Lérès), the "Artisans of New Days" issued an appeal in *Le Figaro* in October 1919 for "the artist, the writer, and the intellectual . . . [to federate] their forces and their rights in order to work more efficaciously and to live better in the community" (Germain, *Syndicalisme* 55).¹¹ A single French union for dramatic, lyric, and film writers was established in 1922 (*Comœdia* 9 Feb. 1922: 1), while the Group for the Defense of Intellectual Workers was formed in the legislature (*Comœdia* 17 Feb. 1922: 2). The French syndicalist Henri Clouard believed intellectuals must abandon their "solitary individualism" (16): a "new Saint-Simonism" was needed so that they could lead society to a brighter, utopic future (18). "[N]othing could be done" in modern society without intellectuals, Henri de Weindel argued, since they were the ones who had to teach society how to be modern (6).

Efforts to federate intellectuals also took place on an international level. In 1920 the Congress of International Associations called for the creation of an international organization for intellectual workers, nothing less than "a vast collective brain" working for "the good of the entire human community" (La Fontaine and Otlet 8, 6). The resulting Confederation of Intellectual Workers, an international syndicate with national branches throughout Europe, had over twenty thou-

sand members within six months of its founding (Germain, “Confédération”). These organizations attempted to give intellectuals a clearer sense of their social role: Adolphe Delemer, an economist, wrote, “Speaking frankly, workers of the mind are not given any role to play. Left to their caprices, intellectuals are more prone to the extremes of political passions than any other group. Thus we see them divided into two camps, persuaded that their duty is to fight each other, not to work for the public good . . .” (16). The second assembly of the League of Nations, held in Paris in December 1922, formed the Commission on International Cooperation for Intellectuals, whose first members included Henri Bergson, Marie Curie, Einstein, and Gilbert Murray (*Times* 19 Dec. 1922: 9). An example of federation among artists who opposed *passadistas* (people stuck in the past) and *academicas* was the February 1922 Week of Modern Art, held at São Paulo’s Theatro Municipal and one of the key events in Brazilian cultural modernity (Gonçalves 20).

If the *Nouvelle revue française* joked that the Congress of Paris would create a “Ministry of the Mind” (Gabory 250), Breton sought to federate artists through a “minimum of indispensable agreement” about the modern, applicable across the arts and acceptable to as many artists as possible. To that end, the congress’s organizing committee did not privilege any artistic form or tendency but sought to represent existing trends. Auric was part of Les Six, a group of Montparnasse musicians whose compositions mixed popular forms like jazz and music hall dances with tonal and formal innovation. Breton was closely linked to Dada but had broader ties to the literary scene through *Littérature*. Jean Paulhan was secretary to the editor of the *Nouvelle revue française*, the most prestigious literary review of the time. As a cofounder of *Aventure*, a publication issued by University of Paris students, Roger Vitrac gave voice to youth. Delaunay and Léger had been in the post-cubist

Puteaux group, and while Delaunay’s bold use of color led him to develop Orphism, an offshoot of cubism, Léger’s recent work had been in a mechanical vein. Ozenfant, an architect and designer as well as a painter, developed purism with Le Corbusier; their *L’esprit nouveau* proclaimed itself “the first review in the world devoted to the aesthetic of our times in all its manifestations” (Eliel 23).¹²

Although looking like unmanageable diversity, these differences served a larger goal. As the initial announcement was at pains to point out, the organizers were not “qualified representatives of anyone” (*Comœdia* 3 Jan. 1922: 2). They offered descriptive representation: by mirroring existing artistic beliefs, the organizing committee “looked like” the artists it sought to bring together.¹³ To that end, there was talk of adding André Germain, the founder of *Écrits nouveaux*, and Pierre Reverdy, from *Nord-Sud*, to the organizing committee. And there were calls for even greater inclusion: Franz Hellens offered “to represent the tendencies of French-speaking Belgium,” and Theo van Doesburg claimed to be a “representative of the most advanced Dutch artists” (Letter to Congress).

Correspondents to the organizing committee situated the congress in this corporatist current. In early May 1922 (one month after the congress was pronounced dead), Amelia Defries asked the organizers to advertise an “international conference to debate the method of forming, on a cooperative system, an international arts organization.” This London conference’s lofty ambitions included creating a “federation” of British arts under the umbrella of a single professional association, uniting British art with “the arts of all the world,” “build[ing] in London a palace of all the arts,” and creating an international organization devoted to the arts (Defries).¹⁴ Another letter of adhesion, by a certain Louis Kosciusko, noted, “It is necessary that innovators—thinkers, writers, artists, and composers—group themselves in a single unit

to defend their common interests against editors, art dealers, the Society of Men of Letters and Composers of Music, who are all set on preventing debutants and individuals without a personal fortune from making a living." Kosciusko critiques not just market forces, an old refrain by now, but also established professional associations whose membership requirements (a certain number of published works to be considered an author, a minimum number of paid performances per year to be a musician) structurally collaborate with the market. Innovators evidently needed protection, both intellectual and institutional, from the ravages of the market, yet this argument conceded the difficulties new art had in reaching a wide public.

A necessary aspect of Breton's wide-reaching federation was procedural evenhandedness. If, as Aragon noted, the congress instituted a "sort of democracy of modernism" (Dachy, *Dada* 361), it was an unusual one. In a planning document Breton stipulated, "The efforts of the members of the organizing committee are not guided in any direction but opening the congress in the most favorable conditions. It is from this point of view that they apologize for giving here some complementary details concerning the mode of your participation" (Planning doc.). In a line that Paulhan eliminated, Breton observed that the procedures entailed "a mode whose arbitrariness is not lost on them [the organizers], but they judge it more appropriate to avoid all contestation and waste of time." In public the agenda was further clarified: "All tendencies, even the most extreme, including those [Dada] that claim to represent the person to whom we are referring [Tzara], will be taken equally into consideration." The next line, though, gives away the game: "The only thing we will not permit is for the fate of the enterprise to depend on the schemes of an impostor avid for fame" (*Comœdia* 7 Feb. 1922: 1).

In effect, principles, no matter how strongly held, could not be permitted to

block compromise, and "[e]very person attending the congress will be expected, in the first instance, to respond to the set questions" (Planning doc.). Abandoning particular agendas would be a small price to pay since defining the modern is "an experience vast enough that, in front of it, personalities are effaced" (*Comœdia* 3 Jan. 1922: 2). But there had to be limits to openness. After all, what could one do with the self-proclaimed founder of "l'école logique" (the school of logic), who asked that the congress adopt his theory (Janot, Letter [1922])? Would he be pitted against the autodidact whose discoveries amounted to "a critical revision of all our knowledge, the exact sciences included" (Fua)? And should they confront Maurice Lautreuil, a painter who believed that marriage led to "suspect and dangerous" behavior and that "every meat-eater should be considered diseased and put under the charge of humanity, of which he is the enemy" (Lautreuil)? Besides these cranks, Aragon admitted that collaborating with "individuals that we had always fought and that, in general, I simply despised" would be "impossible" (Dachy, *Archives* 359–60). There must be "severe discipline," the organizers were warned, so that the congress would not turn into "a pretext for merrymaking by jokesters and agitators" (Janot, Letter [1922]). After noting the open conflict between the organizers and the "young foreigner" (Tzara), *L'intransigeant* mused, "Will the congress be calm? That is what the organizers want" (8 Feb. 1922: 2).

[III]

All was not calm, though. The congress was brought down by a phrase—*venu de Zurich*—with xenophobic connotations. This was unfortunate and ironic: the congress was advertised throughout Europe, and efforts were made to interest international writers. If Breton sought to escape the limitations of the national, his personal attack on Tzara

was self-defeating. The federation of artists he wanted to create turned out in force—but only to unite against him.

Breton's remark about "the promoter of a 'movement' hailing from Zurich" was loaded with history. Even before Tzara arrived in France, the September 1919 *Nouvelle revue française* called Dada an elaborate ploy to sap the creative energy of French youth and insisted that Paris would not give in to "this type of [Germanic] bullshit" (158–60). After Dada became all the rage in France, the attacks grew in violence. "Extremists, revolutionaries, Bolsheviks, Dadaists—same flour, same origin, same poison" began "Herr Dada," a 1920 *Le gaULOIS* column by the popular novelist Marcel Boulenger. Dada's ideas "are not *French*. . . . [Dada] is an Asiatic, not a European, theory," said Maurice Schwob, the editor of a Nantes newspaper, who likened the movement to a "Trojan horse." These "undesirable foreigners [*métèques*]" were ruining the French language, *Liberté* announced (19 May 1920).¹⁵ Tzara's "petit nègre" use of language was seen as a threat to the unsullied glories of "the mirror of our culture" (*Quatrième état* [Toulouse] 10 Apr. 1920; *Le Senne*). The only thing to be done, a Caen newspaper noted, was to "exterminate" this "occult evil" (*Le carillon* 5 May 1920). The cultivated art critic Jacques-Émile Blanche called Dada the product of "young mixed-raced persons from the Orient," while in the *Nouvelle revue française*, André Gide bluntly noted of Tzara, "They tell me he's a foreigner. I can easily believe it. A Jew. You took the words out of my mouth" (477).

It was not just the popular press, in other words, that bandied xenophobic, anti-Dada rhetoric about. The artists rallying to Tzara's side were also mindful of the rising anti-Semitism and anti-immigrant prejudice in postwar France. With its one-and-a-half million war dead and its political life dominated by questions of war reparations, France echoed with shrill cries over its doomed de-

mographic future, over the diminished value not just of the franc but also of French culture. Labor Minister Daniel-Vincent linked these concerns when he addressed the Paris Book Fair in 1921:

[W]e want the eyes of the entire world to turn eagerly toward the luminous intelligence of our victorious nation [*patrie*]. Thinkers, artists, doctors, jurists, engineers, architects, poets, and men of the world [*gens du monde*], whether they live in the Americas or Asia or belong to the youth in central and eastern Europe, are avid to receive our culture, to nourish themselves on our teachings, and we are suffering in not being able to give them this in abundance, as a mother suffers when unable to give enough bread to her children. (Belin 210)

By February 1922, as the cosmopolitan Swiss writer Guy de Pourtalès noted, the prevailing climate throughout Europe was overwhelming nationalism: "The name 'European' is no longer held in high honor. . . . Never before has one been more French, more German, more Spanish than today, and less European. . . . It is clear that the war taught us nothing except how to better hate" (278). In France growing unemployment and the rising cost of living led to a "veritable crisis" of xenophobia and to calls for the expulsion of immigrants (Got 5). Charles Maurras warned readers of the "horrible vermin of Oriental Jews" who infected Paris with "the plague and typhus as they wait[ed] for the revolution."

For Tzara—who was stateless because Romania systematically denied citizenship to Jews born in the country (Hentea)—it was self-evident that "an international congress that criticizes someone for being a *foreigner*" had no right to exist (*Liberté* 13 Feb. 1922). Tzara's sensitivity to xenophobia and anti-Semitism was not fully understood by his French Dada colleagues. Aragon recounts that in late 1921 Tzara had gone into a "mad rage" when called "a little Romanian Jew" by a critic

in the Belgian review *Ça ira*; while Tzara was “serious like a high priest” and spoke of challenging the critic to a duel, Aragon and his companions “laughed hysterically” at what they saw as Tzara’s overreaction (*Projet* 127). When Tzara first arrived in Paris he had been instructed on how “to say Dada as it is done here” (56). The Congress of Paris confirmed Tzara’s suspicions about his being outside national (and religious) borders. And so Tzara fought back. *Le cœur à barbe* declared that “[i]t is not a quality to be French” (3) and gloated that the “Congress of Modernism . . . died of chocolate nationalism, of vanilla vanity, and of the Swiss stupidity of some of our more precise cocitizens” (7). At the Closerie des Lilas assemblage censuring Breton, Constantin Brancusi insisted that “in art there are no foreigners” (qtd. in Tzara, Congress).

Despite its global ambitions, the congress remained, as its familiar name suggests, a Parisian affair. Its organizing committee was bound to create a French bias. Ozenfant’s wartime *L’élán* had as its objective “the propaganda of French art, of French independence—in sum, of the true French spirit” (2). Delaunay’s most famous compositions were of the Eiffel Tower. The Barrès trial showed Breton’s continuing obsession with figures whose importance remained overwhelming in France but meant little elsewhere. The *Nouvelle revue française*, where Paulhan worked, took its mission of showcasing French culture seriously. It was not entirely surprising that Dada—which in design and practice was thoroughly internationalist—did not have a place in this pantheon.

[IV]

Though the congress was presented as a “manifesto of avant-garde reviews,” Tzara called it an “enterprise that wants to be avant-garde” (“À propos du Congrès” 154)—implying that it was anything but. Paul Éluard, Georges Ribemont-Dessaigues, Erik Satie, and Tzara charged in

a collective letter that the “ridiculous bureaucratic preparations and the henhouse capitalist advertising for the great congress on the outlining of modern art are already bearing fruit, leading to complications that reveal the organizers’ true intentions: the desire to annihilate anything alive and to promote the reactionary in all fields” (*Comœdia* 20 Feb. 1922: 2). If the avant-garde is notoriously difficult to define (Sell), contestation over its meaning contributed to the congress’s demise. Breton sought to redefine the avant-garde by giving it a programmatic form: he wanted a detailed accounting of the forces making up the modern so that a vanguard could divide the art world into supporters and opponents. A vanguard is a social agent embedded in history; with its distinct organization, belief system, and identity, a vanguard seeks to win over society through persuasion or, failing that, force, as was the case with Marinetti and the fascists or the Soviet constructivists who sided with Stalin (Groys). Tzara and the Dadaists insisted that the avant-garde resided on an ideational, not social, plane and that any codification or formal prescription would take away its unique value.

Defining the modern spirit was for Breton avant-garde because a rigorous definition allowed for the future course of society to be plotted. This understanding of the avant-garde is rooted in the ideas of Saint-Simon, a nineteenth-century socialist utopian who first applied the term *avant-garde* to the arts and who was enjoying a resurgence of popularity among proponents calling for intellectuals to federate:

We, as artists, will serve as the avant-garde: for amongst all the arms at our disposal, the power of the Arts is the swiftest and most expeditious. When we wish to spread new ideas amongst men, we use, in turn, the lyre, ode or song, story or novel; we inscribe those ideas on marble or canvas, and we popularize them in poetry and in song. We also make use of the stage. . . . If today our role seems

limited or of secondary importance, it is for a simple reason: the Arts at present lack those elements most essential to their success—a common impulse and a general scheme. (Saint-Simon 40–41)

Saint-Simon wanted the avant-garde to lay the groundwork for the progressive transformation of society, which required that the arts be federated and that they act together to “support the general movement of the human spirit” (41). The ideas and vocabulary of Saint-Simon’s “didactic-utilitarian” avant-garde (Călinescu 103) are not dissimilar to those used by the organizers of the Congress of Paris.¹⁶

For most of its history, Dada made use of advertising, polemics, and public manifestations to further its cause. Tzara’s gifts for propaganda and provocation were legendary. This has made it difficult to see that Dada contained an altogether different understanding of the avant-garde, which opposed it to Breton’s modern vanguard or futurist *avanguardisti*. There was something “cosmic” about Dada that transcended any set of axioms: “One of these days it will be known that before Dada, after Dada, without Dada, toward Dada, for Dada, against Dada, with Dada, in spite of Dada, it is always Dada” (Tzara, “Les dessous” 588). It is not happenstance that *Dada* was chanted like a mantra, that so many Dadaists were attracted to mysticism, or that critics likened Dada to a “musico-artistico-literary religion” (Bicard). When Breton attacked Tzara for not being Dada’s genuine founder, Tzara could dismiss the accusation as irrelevant because Dada existed independently of historical acts or personalities (“Les dessous”). The *Dada Manifesto 1918* is not an enumeration of principles but a dismantlement of systemic thinking. “I destroy the drawers of the brain and of social organization: spread demoralization wherever I go,” Tzara wrote (qtd. in Motherwell 78–79). “Let each man proclaim: there is a great nega-

tive work of destruction to be accomplished. We must sweep and clean. . . . Without aim or design, without organization: indomitable madness, decomposition” (81). The mixture of genres and forms in Dada art or performances was an escape from formal prescriptions, while the juxtaposition of incongruous forms heightened the “intensity” of fleeting Dada moments (Tzara, “Manifeste de Monsieur Antipyrine”). Tzara’s instructions for writing a poem—take a pair of scissors, cut out a newspaper article, snip out the individual words, put them all in a hat, take them out one by one, transcribe—were ironic: all prescriptive artistic techniques have no more sense or validity than this word-paper-scissors recipe. One cannot become a Dadaist by assenting to a set of beliefs. Doing so would place Dada on a plane of discursive formulations one reasons about, yet Dada makes sense only if it is accepted prior and in opposition to any formal system. Dada was indeterminate and endlessly variable, constantly changing as individuals made free use of it, while the congress wanted to turn the modern spirit into a vanguard, a formal and prescriptive basis for art and action. The last thing Tzara wanted was for art to become—as he considered surrealism to be in 1924—“a kind of technique” (Crevel). Any system, formal principle, or even definition, the Dadaists understood all too well, risks becoming fossilized into a “mechanization of thought,” whereas genuine thought is “made in the mouth” (Tzara, “Apéritifs” 614).

[v]

In June 1922, Van Doesburg complained to Tzara about the “entirely *idiotic* and reactionary” milieu at the “International Congress of Avant-Garde Artists” held in Düsseldorf (Letter to Tristan Tzara). Undeterred by the disappointing conference season, Van Doesburg invited Tzara to address the Constructivist Congress at the Bauhaus in Weimar in mid-September. Tzara provided the desired

scandal by taunting the audience and announcing Dada's death:

In fact, the true Dadas have always separated themselves from Dada. . . . I know that you expect from me some explanations about Dada. I will not give you any. Tell me why you exist. You haven't a clue. . . . [L]ife is a game of words. . . . Dada is not at all modern, it's more likely a return to a quasi-Buddhist religion of indifference. . . . [I]t proceeds in destroying more and more, not in space, but in itself. ("Conférence" 419–23)

This cryptic intervention, an attempt to understand "the full significance of *nothing*" (419), was haunted by the lessons of the Congress of Paris, which had shown the power of Dada negation but also, perhaps, its end point.

Breton was also haunted by the failure of the congress. Although he remained convinced of the need for intellectuals to lead French society, the ruins of the project led him to consider formulating a "mouvement *flou*"—a "vague movement" whose nature could not be defined: "Until further notice, anything that can delay the categorization of beings or ideas—that can, in a word, maintain ambiguity—has my full approval" (*Lost Steps* 4). Breton seemed to be making a complete U-turn, but he never took this idea further. The "First Surrealist Manifesto" was two years away, but the critical and organizational lessons of the failed congress provided the impetus for and the backdrop to Breton's reflections on the need to escape from the grips of "absolute rationalism" in order to search out "the luminous phenomenon" that would liberate both the mind and the social body (*Manifestes* 20, 49).

If those were the immediate consequences on the two main actors in the Congress of Paris affair, a deeper reading of this nonevent would consider the contradictions embedded in modernism as a critical concept. The congress sought to provide a "minimum of indispensable agreement" about modern-

ism and to recast it as an international phenomenon. In the past two decades both goals have been accomplished by the new modernist studies, which calls for an "*expansion*" of modernism in "temporal, spatial, and vertical directions" (Mao and Walkowitz 737). Modernist scholars are no longer confined to the Anglo-American 1890–1930 period but investigate modernism as "a cultural formation occurring in different forms, in different times, and in different places" (Ross 1).¹⁷ There is a twist, though: whereas Breton sought out the power of an exact definition to provide a theoretical and practical guide to artists, the new modernist studies avoids defining modernism, so as to bring within the concept's purview ever more objects of study (Friedman). Consider the following from the introduction to the edited volume *Geomodernisms: Race, Modernism, Modernity* (2005):

[T]he term [*modernism*] serves not as the center around which other projects get organized but as a contested and historical referent that suffers pressure from the affiliations, indifference, or antagonism of diverse twentieth-century writers and artists. . . . Our explicit aim is to collapse the margin and center assumptions embedded in the term *modernism* by conjuring instead a web of twentieth-century literary practices, shaped by the circuitry of race, ethnicity, nativism, nationalism, and imperialism in modernity, and by the idea or commodity of "modernism" itself. (Doyle and Winkiel 5–6)

Although this passage comes from the section defining the subtitle's three elements, no definition of modernism is ever offered except for the acknowledgment of certain ideas "embedded" in it. Yet if this underspecified modernism must be "contested" (presumably because it cannot explain literary practice or history in the regions or times the collection covers), it is unclear why it—as "idea or commodity"—remains a privileged point of approach: as Eric Hayot puts it, the furniture

might change but the foundation remains untouched (5). If anything, the continuing use of modernism in contemporary scholarship demonstrates the concept's resilience and strength: scholars cannot do without it, even when its utility is called into question.

Had the Congress of Paris taken place, Jacques-Émile Blanche observed, it would have amounted to "rhythmic gymnastics . . . the entertainment of philologists and rationalists" (407). No definition would have been agreed on, he continued, because "[t]he particularity of our 'modern spirit' is that we speak about it indefatigably and that, in the midst of its continual changing, we want to define it, to fix it . . ." (407). Blanche's critique is instructive in drawing attention to the antinomies that constitute the modern, which, like T. S. Eliot's "tradition," is continually reshaped in a dialectical manner: a new work of art feeds off tradition or the modern, but in so doing it recasts and modifies that field.

Breton assumed that the congress's deliberations would be endowed with authority since they would be the result of a federated assembly working across the arts. Yet because he demanded that subjectivity and personalities be effaced for a dispassionate construction of the forces making up the modern (which were always backward-looking, given the dandy's top hat and the futurist's locomotive), the speaking subject rooted in the modern now was eliminated. The modern was defined retrospectively and with the future in mind, an operation that removed the present from the equation, for it was the sum of past actions that could be productively harnessed to a future course of action that interested Breton. An extension of this type of thinking can be found in Aragon's "Introduction to 1930," written at a time when Aragon was moving toward revolutionary communism: "Modernity is a function of the time that expresses the emotional topicality [*actualité*] of certain objects whose essential novelty is not their [primary] characteristic,

but whose power [*efficacité*] is due to their recent discovery of their expressive values" (58). Providing as his primary example the poetry of Lautréamont, Aragon considers the modern as made up of objects from the past that are rediscovered and recuperated because of their future relevance—but this formulation, as Henri Meschonnic points out, leaves out the present (77).

If there was confusion in the art world, Tzara noted in a letter to Breton announcing his refusal to take part in the congress, it was partly due to the "substitution of groups for personalities" (qtd. in Sanouillet 240)—and so Breton's modernism would only contribute to the problem, for it would embolden a theoretical dogma rather than free the "boom-boom" of individuals (qtd. in Motherwell 79). Breton's congress sought, in other words, a foundation for progress in the arts, whereas Dada dismissed any time but a spontaneous present: "What good have philosophical theories served? Have they helped us take a step forward or backward? Where is 'forward,' where is 'backward'? . . . What we have now is *spontaneity*. Not because it is more beautiful or better than something else, but because it emerges freely out of us without the intervention of speculative ideas; it represents us" (Tzara, "Conférence" 421). To be alive, a work must project an immanent sensibility from the lived body of its creator.¹⁸ That this would lead to contradiction and confusion was never denied by Tzara, but that was the price of free creation when "the true Dadas are against Dada" (qtd. in Motherwell 92). Tzara loved the "new" so much that he could not support a codification of modernism that depended on retrospective reordering, an "archaeology" of the past (qtd. in Motherwell 81), and a programmatic future. The formally modernist work did not interest Tzara, for it amounted to technique (a *travail de perfection*) rather than expression emanating from an unstable and indeterminate present. This present could not be a foundation on which to construct "high"

art (the present is always self-destroying, always giving way to another present), but any painting hanging on the walls, the Dadaists used to remind their audiences in Zurich, is slowly dying, metamorphosing into something else: the paint is flaking, colors are losing their luster and so must be retouched, the frame is splitting. Tzara's critical intervention lay in recognizing that any approach, form, or subject matter was necessarily incomplete.

To the disciplined artists of the Bauhaus, Tzara had this to say several months after the Congress affair: "[A]ll is relative. What is Beauty, Truth, Art, the Good, Freedom? Words that for everyone mean different things. . . . We have become accustomed to giving these words a moral value and objective power that they do not have. Their meaning changes from one person to the next, from one country to the next" ("Conférence" 421). It is this diversity of forms and meanings that Tzara insisted on throughout the congress affair, and in many ways the congress points to the difficulties of conceptualizing the modern as both a lived event and a textual experience, a fleeting "moment of intensity" (Tzara, "Note"). This diachronic reading of texts and history would attempt to re-create "the present in its 'presentness,' in its purely instantaneous quality," to borrow Matei Călinescu's analysis of Baudelaire (49), but it would also seek to understand the continuing attractions (or failures to attract) of a work after its time of emergence passes and one confronts it in different circumstances and with different critical, moral, and cultural understandings. How, in other words, does an artwork establish itself as modern, and by what processes can it continue to be modern when, taking a cue from Gertrude Stein's eulogy of masterpieces, "the minute it is necessary it has in it no possibility of going on" (150)? Such a question would oblige scholars to embed texts in a struggle for timelessness, as immanent projections of an artistic sensibility and as social claims for survival.

To the famous triptych starting Beckett's *The Unnamable*—"Where now? Who now? When now?" (267)—a further question would need to be added: "How now?" Understanding the position of texts and artworks in the modern would look beyond literary periods and formalism. If we could freely admit that people "are different and [that] it is their diversity that is interesting" (Tzara, "Conférence" 421), there would be a more self-critical appraisal of how individual works are valuable or relevant to that emphatic present, "LA VIE" (Tzara, "Manifeste Dada" 367).

NOTES

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1. All unattributed translations are mine.

2. The main archival source for information on the congress is the "Congrès de Paris" dossier at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, compiled by Breton and including press clippings, correspondence, and reports by the organizing committee. Tzara also compiled a dossier on the congress, now held at the Bibliothèque Littéraire Jacques Doucet. The other key archival sources include press clippings at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal and the multivolume Picabia dossiers at Doucet.

3. The congress's organizers occasionally used the term *modernism* (Working draft) but generally favored *modern spirit*. Simone Kahn, Breton's wife, called it a "modernist congress" (Dachy, *Archives* 520), a phrase Aragon also used.

4. In France *le modernisme* has made inroads in art history and architecture, but in literary studies *le moderne* or *la modernité*, both of which stem from Balzac and Baudelaire and examine the impact of "modern life" on literature, are preferred. *Le modernisme* has pejorative connotations in French, as an excessive, blind attachment to the modern; as Meschonnic explains (66), it is also considered an Anglo-American term developed ex post facto by critics to delimit a certain period of literary experimentation.

5. Breton insisted that the Dadaists give marks to over two hundred writers and public figures on a scale from -25 to +20: -25 expressed "great aversion, 0 absolute

indifference,” and +20 “unconditional devotion of heart and mind.” Tzara begrudgingly took part in this school-boy exercise, printed in the March 1921 issue of *Littérature*, giving the score of –25 for nearly two-thirds of the entries. His average score was –16, whereas Aragon’s and Breton’s were positive.

6. Aragon sent Barrès a dedicated copy of *Anicet*, and Breton had asked Barrès to write the preface to Jacques Vaché’s *War Letters* (Sanouillet 345; see also Bonnet 15, 95–96).

7. Bonnet reproduces the transcript of the trial, which was also reprinted in the May 1921 issue of *Littérature*.

8. Valéry was published in the first issue of *Littérature* (March 1919), and Breton owed his job at Gallimard to Valéry’s intercession. De Chirico became a favorite painter of the surrealists, although the Italian artist was circumspect in his response to the group. Tzara, incidentally, was once very close to De Chirico’s brother, Alberto Savinio, who supplied Tzara with a list of Italian contacts and whose “Un vomissement musical” (“Musical Vomiting”) was published in *Dada 1*. Their epistolary friendship ended after Savinio wrote a deeply personal attack on Dada (and Tzara) in 1919 (Italia 144–46; Rossi).

9. Breton applied to join the French Communist Party after the Congress of Tours but was discouraged by bureaucratic obstacles. In the mid-1920s, after the Rif War in Morocco, surrealism allied itself with *Clarté*, a militant magazine run by Henri Barbusse, but the alliance proved short-lived. In the “Second Surrealist Manifesto,” Breton admitted that surrealism’s political engagements amounted to an “uninterrupted succession of lapses and failures, of zigzags and defections” (*Manifestes* 151). On the politics of surrealism, see Reynaud-Paligot; Short.

10. In *After Cubism*, written by Ozenfant and Le Corbusier in 1918, the two founders of *L’esprit nouveau* criticize modern art for failing to include “scientific principles of analysis . . . organization and classification” (142).

11. The modern sociology of intellectuals was created in the 1920s by Julien Benda, Antonio Gramsci, and Karl Mannheim.

12. The subtitle of *L’esprit nouveau* showed the expansive reach of purism: *Littérature, architecture, peinture, sculpture, musique, sciences pures et appliquées, esthétique expérimentale, esthétique de l’ingénieur, urbanisme, philosophie, sociologie, économique, sciences morales et politiques, vie moderne, théâtre, spectacles, les sports, les faits*.

13. Descriptive representation is assured when representatives closely reflect certain salient descriptive characteristics of a population (such as race or gender): the representative body “appears” like the populace. The all-male organizing committee of the Congress of Paris did not “look” like modernism, of course, but its ideological diversity was a way to minimize charges that it had a particular ideology.

14. This initiative, already discussed in *L’intransigeant* in early February, was applauded for ensuring that the

“work and social rank” of intellectuals would be respected (8 Feb. 1922: 2). Defries was a prolific author who wrote books on popular science, the eighteenth-century agriculture writer Arthur Young, the Scottish urban planner Patrick Geddes, the International Exposition Dedicated to Art and Technology in Modern Life (*Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*), held in Paris in 1937; she also wrote the lavishly illustrated *The Book of the Mushroom*. I have not been able to find any additional information about the May 1922 conference.

15. *Métèques* was roundly used in this period as a derogatory term for foreigners, especially Jews. The reactionary art critic Camille Mauclair entitled the second volume of his polemic against modern art *Les métèques contre l’art français*.

16. Breton’s fidelity to such beliefs was later expressed in *Ode to Charles Fourier*, also a postwar work, although this one dated from 1947.

17. The new modernist studies is not a theoretical school but rather a methodological approach coupling historical contextualization with formalist readings. This can involve complicating the story of canonical figures and texts by revealing their engagement with popular culture, economics, or unsavory politics—Eliot and music halls, Joyce and luxury editions, Wyndham Lewis and fascism—to put modernists in what Beckett’s *Molloy* calls “a wealth of filthy circumstance” (59).

18. Nickels tries to redeem spontaneity as a modernist praxis, but his work only shows how spontaneity becomes part of the social, which is surely not what Tzara and other Dadaists intended.

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Wallace Stevens's Point of View

JOSHUA KOTIN

IN NOVEMBER 1929, LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN GAVE HIS FIRST AND ONLY public lecture. "A Lecture on Ethics" (as it came to be known) presents the following thought experiment:¹

Suppose one of you were an omniscient person and therefore knew all the movements of all the bodies in the world dead or alive and that he also knew all the states of mind of all the human beings that ever lived, and suppose this man wrote all he knew in a big book, then this book would contain the whole description of the world; and what I want to say is, that book would contain nothing that we would call an *ethical* judgment or anything that would logically imply such a judgment. It would of course contain all relative judgments of value and all true scientific propositions and in fact all true propositions that can be made. But all the facts described would, as it were, stand on the same level and in the same way all propositions stand on the same level. There are no propositions which, in any absolute sense, are sublime, important, or trivial.

Wittgenstein then provides an example:

If for instance in our world-book we read the description of a murder with all its details physical and psychological, the mere description of these facts will contain nothing which we could call an *ethical* proposition. The murder will be on exactly the same level as any other event, for instance the falling of a stone. Certainly the reading of this description might cause us pain or rage or any other emotion, or we might read about the pain or rage caused by this murder in other people when they heard of it, but there will simply be facts, facts, facts, but no Ethics. (6–7)

The implications of this version of the fact-ethics dichotomy (known more generally as the fact-value dichotomy) resonate across Wallace Stevens's poetry.² Indeed, the dichotomy captures the metaphysical

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foundations of Stevens's work. It is the source of his anxieties about nihilism and relativism—about living in a world without God.

Translated into Stevensese, "facts, facts, facts, but no Ethics" becomes, in a line from the first version of "Owl's Clover," "[f]romage and coffee and cognac and no gods" (579).³ The "falling of a stone" becomes Stevens's rocks, which mark the same absence of value, and "mere description" resounds as "mere blusteriness," "mere delight," "mere sound," "mere example," "mere weather," "mere air," "mere repetitions," "mere desire," "mere brown clods," "mere catching weeds of talk," "mere savage presence," "mere objectiveness of things," "mere flowing of water," "Mere Being."⁴ In all these cases, "mere" marks the same deficiency: things (stones, cognac) and psychological states (pain, rage, pleasure) without absolute or intrinsic value.

The fact-value dichotomy thus grounds the two commonplaces of Stevens's poetry: his desire for absolute value in a world of fact (what Schopenhauer would call his "metaphysical need") and his belief in poetry's ability to satisfy that desire.⁵ "The earth, for us, is flat and bare," Stevens writes in "The Man with the Blue Guitar." "Poetry // Exceeding music must take the place / Of empty heaven and its hymns . . ." (136–37). In his lecture "Two or Three Ideas," he asserts, "In an age of disbelief or, what is the same thing, in a time that is largely humanistic, in one sense or another, it is for the poet to supply the satisfactions of belief, in his measure and in his style" (842). His *Collected Poetry and Prose* is replete with such statements—statements that point to an absence of absolute value and maintain poetry's compensatory power.

Is there anything left to say about Stevens's pursuit of value? The pursuit connects almost all Stevens scholarship, even the most recent—from Lisa Siraganian's account of Stevens's fantasies about global capitalism to Simon Critchley's discussion of how Stevens overcomes epistemology and from Matthew

Mutter's claims about Stevens's tautologies to Charles Altieri's description of Stevens's relation to phenomenology. The pursuit is the basis for identifying Stevens as a philosophical poet. Arguments for his aestheticism or existentialism, pragmatism or skepticism, or realism or idealism are arguments for how best to describe his response to his metaphysical need. Kant, Hegel, Emerson, James, Nietzsche, Husserl, Heidegger, Derrida, Rorty—these names in Stevens scholarship mark ways of addressing the fact-value dichotomy.⁶ Is the only option for scholars to continue to pair poet and philosophy, or poet and philosopher—or to ignore the problem of value altogether?

In this essay, I try to describe Stevens's pursuit of value from his point of view—especially during the act of writing. In part 1, I discuss his attitude toward his metaphysical need. In part 2, I examine how three of his poems fail to satisfy it: "Sunday Morning" (1915, 1923), "The Idea of Order at Key West" (1934), and "Credences of Summer" (1947). Each poem, I argue, approaches the problem of value as a problem of community formation. Each poem is an experiment—an attempt to establish a collective response to the fact-value dichotomy that avoids nihilism and what Wittgenstein calls the "supernatural" (7). In part 3, I detail how a fourth poem, "The Auroras of Autumn" (1948), solves the problem of value (for Stevens) by abandoning the idea of community altogether. Its success, I suggest, hinges on its inaccessibility—how it prevents readers from sharing Stevens's point of view.

The essay, in this way, presents two narratives. The first tracks Stevens's experience of his poetry over his career—how he develops and learns from a series of increasingly extravagant experiments. The second describes the limits of this approach. My aim is to revitalize a central topic in Stevens scholarship and, in the process, to reconsider Stevens's relation to philosophy. (Stevens responds to

a major philosophical problem and relies on philosophical insights, but his work does not respect the conventions of philosophical inquiry—including the convention that philosophical claims should be public, open to justification.) By the end of the essay, I address a series of more general questions: What is experimental poetry? How do poets think in verse? Why do poets write difficult poems? What makes a poem difficult in the first place?

[I]

In "Exoticism and Structuralism in Wallace Stevens," Fredric Jameson identifies Stevens's belief in poetry's power to generate value in a world of fact as his "ideology." Jameson describes this ideology—"systematically elaborated and produced in the poems on death and the religion of art, from the early 'Sunday Morning' on"—as "the least interesting [part] of the Stevens canon." Citing "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," he adds that "as soon as we come to be convinced of the fictionality of meaning, the whole operation loses its interest; philosophies of 'as if' are notoriously unsatisfying and self-unravelling" (220–21). For Jameson, Stevens's ideology is not just banal—it is self-defeating.

One could compound this critique by objecting to Jameson's "and produced"—for Stevens's engagement with value never seems to move beyond elaboration. The poetry is obsessed with its own aims and resources. "Many of the long poems are unreadable," writes A. Alvarez; "you work down to what he is saying on *this* topic only to find that it is much the same as he has always said about everything else" (133). From this perspective, Jameson's claim that Stevens's ideology is the "least interesting" part of his canon is a wry joke. Stevens repeats himself endlessly—his ideology is his canon. "He might have taken to drink," J. V. Cunningham suggests; "he took to poems, instead, to too many rot-gut poems" (381).

Scholars with a range of critical commitments present similar objections to Stevens's poetry. Randall Jarrell argues, "The habit of philosophizing in poetry—or of seeming to philosophize, of using a philosophical tone, images, constructions, of having quasi-philosophic daydreams—has been unfortunate for Stevens" (122). Hugh Kenner calls the content of the poems "discursive variations on the familiar theme of a first-generation agnostic" (*Homemade World* 57). Camille Paglia complains that in the late work "[g]orgeous images or lines still abound, but pompous, big-think gestures have become a crutch" (21). For these scholars, Stevens is often his own worst enemy: his endless and repetitive metacommentary compromises his art.

Stevens, I think, would have sympathized with these views. Indeed, these scholars get right something that Stevens's less critical readers miss—readers who endorse his ideology and accept his poems as consolatory (e.g., J. Hillis Miller). The poems are repetitive. Philosophies of "as if" are unsatisfying. Yet Stevens's recognition of these facts does not diminish his ideology. He remains committed to providing an account of poetry's metaphysical efficacy in his poetry. Why? What explains his career-long attachment to an ideology he recognizes as frustrating, even impractical?⁷ Are his poems symptoms of akrasia or cruel optimism?⁸ Is he perverse? Is he addicted to poetry?

In poem after poem and across sequences of poems, Stevens asserts the efficacy of his poetry and then laments its inadequacy. A central claim of this essay is that this process is repetitive but not in Cunningham's specific sense. Writing a poem, for Stevens, is not like tossing back one more drink, each the same as the last, save for its diminishing marginal utility. Rather, writing a poem is repetitive in the way experiments are repetitive: iterations that seek closer approximations to the solution of a problem. This is why his ideology survives his dissatisfaction: his poems are not

discrete events but elements in series. Every failure to “supply the satisfactions of belief” warrants yet another attempt. *Collected Poetry and Prose* is a progressive—although not always unilinear—metaphysical project.

[II]

In “Sunday Morning,” Stevens attempts to ameliorate the implications of the fact-value dichotomy by convincing himself and his readers of the adequacy of relative judgments of value. The poem opens with a woman at home, enjoying her breakfast on a Sunday morning. Her experience of pleasure catalyzes rather than satisfies her metaphysical need:

Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
And the green freedom of a cockatoo
Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.
She dreams a little, and she feels the dark
Encroachment of that old catastrophe,
As calm darkens among the water lights. (53)

“Complacencies” (a general sense of satisfaction) combine with specific pleasures (the heat from the sun, the taste and smell of coffee and oranges, the images on a rug) to first “dissipate” and then spur “the dark / Encroachment of that old catastrophe.” This catastrophe, as the poem’s title suggests and the poem will recount, is Jesus’s crucifixion. The recognition of beauty here leads to metaphysical need. In the fifth canto, the woman declares, “[I]n contentment I still feel / The need of some imperishable bliss” (55).

In response to this predicament, Stevens famously claims, “Death is the mother of beauty; hence from her, / Alone, shall come fulfillment to our dreams / And our desires” (55). In other words, “imperishable bliss” is a contradiction in terms: the experience of beauty (and of value generally) requires the apprehension of loss. To adapt the claim to the framework of the fact-value dichotomy: all

judgments of value are necessarily relative—relative to every individual’s experience of the world, to every individual’s sense of mortality. Accordingly, the absence of absolute judgments of value is not a cause for anxiety—such judgments do not exist, cannot exist.

For the remainder of the poem, Stevens tests the adequacy of this claim. In the penultimate canto, he imagines its social implications, depicting a community of men, “supple and turbulent,” offering “boisterous devotion to the sun, / Not as a god, but as a god might be” (55–56). The acknowledgment of their authority—that their “chant of paradise” comes “[o]ut of their blood” rather than from a supernatural source—enables their communion. Stevens writes, “They shall know well the heavenly fellowship / Of men that perish and of the summer morn” (56). Enjambment here makes the point: heavenly fellowship results from a fellowship “of men that perish”—not men enjoying eternal life in heaven.

In the final canto, Stevens returns to the woman’s point of view and offers a portrait of a fully secular world:

She hears, upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries, “The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay.”
We live in an old chaos of the sun,
Or an old dependency of day and night,
Or island solitude, unsponsored, free,
Of that wide water, inescapable.
Deer walk upon our mountains, and the quail
Whistle about us their spontaneous cries;
Sweet berries ripen in the wilderness;
And, in the isolation of the sky,
At evening, casual flocks of pigeons make
Ambiguous undulations as they sink,
Downward to darkness, on extended wings. (56)

In a still-influential reading, Miller claims that “[t]he lady’s experience of the dissolution of the gods leaves her living in a world of exquisite particulars.” This world is compensatory:

its “endless round of birth, death, and the seasons” inspires and sustains individual and collective acts of valorization. Stevens’s humanism resolves the woman’s metaphysical need and his own. Quoting from “*Esthétique du Mal*,” Miller adds, “‘Sunday Morning’ is Stevens’s most eloquent description of the moment when the gods dissolve. Bereft of the supernatural, man does not lie down paralyzed in despair. He sings the creative hymns of a new culture, the culture of those who are ‘wholly human’ and know themselves.” For Miller “Sunday Morning” exemplifies a “creative hymn” that evades nihilism and the supernatural. It makes a virtue of necessity. The discovery that “there never has been any celestial world is a joyful liberation” (222).

This is wishful thinking. “We live in the old chaos of the sun,” Stevens writes—not a world of cyclical change. The canto’s repeated use of “or” links, but does not arbitrate between, competing descriptions of emptiness. Our freedom is inescapable and thus is no freedom at all. To put this point another way: the poem describes a world without positive liberty and replete with negative liberty (to appropriate Isaiah Berlin’s terms [169–81]). There is no constraint on action but also no reason to act—an inauspicious setting for Miller’s “new culture.”

The canto’s final seven lines confirm this emptiness by animating a process of deanthropomorphization: *our* mountains devolve into the quail’s indefinite, spontaneous whistles *about us*. The pun is caustic in its obviousness: it exists to mark our insignificance, the impossibility of the cries’ concerning us. “[A]bout us” only indicates the fact of spatial relations. The pun introduces the poem’s final image: the descent of the pigeons, which, despite their natural markings, are an undifferentiated flock. This is not a world of “exquisite particulars” at all. Stevens emphasizes the pigeons’ fall four times with “sink,” “[d]ownward,” “evening” (the setting sun), and “casual” (from *casus*, “fall” and also “death”).

If the “extended wings” in the poem’s final line provide solace, it is at the expense of Stevens’s ideology and the efforts of the poem up to this point. Although the wings remain visible despite the darkness, they do so in an atmosphere of religious imagery (the Fall, angel’s wings, wings forming an image of the cross) that troubles the stanza’s assertion that “[t]he tomb in Palestine / Is not the porch of spirits lingering. / It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay.” If we refuse this form of consolation, the “extended wings” simply reaffirm our one bastion of certainty: perception of physical extension in space. The poem, in this way, ends irresolutely between two incompatible, unsatisfactory alternatives: Christianity and bald materialism.⁹

“Sunday Morning” is a failure. The poem represents a community that Stevens cannot persuade himself to join. Its solution to the fact-value dichotomy is ultimately no solution at all. But a failure? This sounds ridiculous. The poem is beautiful and persuasive. Its pleasures exceed the pleasures it describes. It convinces Miller, who lionizes its “ring of men” (55). It convinces me.¹⁰ It is Stevens’s most anthologized long poem—surpassing even “Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Black-bird” (Galenson 149). Yet Stevens remains unsatisfied—a fact that forces the question, if “Sunday Morning” cannot resolve his metaphysical need, can any poem?¹¹

Stevens’s subsequent poetry can be read as a response to this question. In “The Idea of Order at Key West,” he tests a different approach to the problem of value. Instead of defending the adequacy of relative judgments of value, he constructs a counterfactual world in which judgments of value are necessarily unanimous and thus absolute. In this world, dissent is impossible: I cannot disagree with Miller, we cannot disagree with Stevens, and (most important) Stevens cannot disagree with himself.

The poem opens with a woman singing by the shore of Key West. Stevens and a

companion, the critic Ramon Fernandez, marvel at the efficacy of her song: "And when she sang, the sea, / Whatever self it had, became the self / That was her song, for she was the maker." As the song absorbs the sea, the world becomes her world: "there never was a world for her / Except the one she sang and, singing, made" (106). Making, here, is an aesthetic and political act. The song is an exercise in sovereignty.

Yet this account is imprecise. The woman may be the song's maker, but she is not the sole source of its power. As Stevens and Fernandez describe the song's efficacy, they also speculate about its etiology: "Whose spirit is this? we said, because we knew / It was the spirit that we sought and knew / That we should ask this often as she sang." Stevens and Fernandez then claim that the spirit that composes the song is "more" than "the dark voice of the sea / That rose" and "the outer voice of sky / And cloud." It is "[m]ore even than her voice, and ours" (105). The spirit ultimately is indistinguishable from the world it creates. It is at once human and nonhuman, artifact and event.

What is the significance of this etiology? A radical monism. The song assimilates its maker. Stevens and Fernandez speak with a single voice. This is why both men appear in the poem: their duet exemplifies the song's efficacy, its power to dissolve difference.¹²

A world without difference—this is the poem's response to the problem of value. As Wittgenstein notes in his lecture, "[T]he *absolute good*, if it is a describable state of affairs, would be one which everybody, independent of his tastes and inclinations, would *necessarily* bring about . . ." (7). "The Idea of Order" represents just such a state of affairs—or, more accurately, it represents a state of affairs without individual tastes and inclinations.¹³ Judgments of value are unanimous because everything is unanimous.

Unsurprisingly, this solution also proves unsatisfactory. In the poem's penultimate

stanza, Stevens addresses Fernandez by name—an act that dissolves their union. In the final stanza, he revises his account of the song's etiology:

Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,
The maker's rage to order words of the sea,
Words of the fragrant portals, dimly starred,
And of ourselves and of our origins,
In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.
(106)

A "rage for order": this is the song's true source—not an amalgam of mind and world but an affective response to chaos. To emphasize this point, Stevens ends the poem with an image of discord. The maker's rage cannot reconcile the "words of the sea" and the words "of ourselves and of our origins." The seascape resists assimilation: "ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds" describe a world beyond comprehension.

What prompts this reversal? One answer is the end of the song itself. In the diegesis of the poem, Stevens abandons his description of unanimity as soon as the song ends. The message: in the face of metaphysical need, art provides respite, not permanent satisfaction. To put this point another way: art helps us to temporarily forget inconvenient truths—in this case, that judgments require volition, that unanimity without individual agency is not unanimity at all.

The skyscapes and seascapes, the solitary woman, the community of men—"The Idea of Order" recasts the central tropes of "Sunday Morning" to imagine a world without the possibility of dissent. Instead of trying to justify the adequacy of relative judgments of value, the poem eliminates the need for justification. But the outcome of the two poems is the same: metaphysical need and failure.

Yet this account is still imprecise. Stevens, the poem's speaker, is seduced by the woman's song and temporarily forgets his metaphysical need. From his point of view, the song fails because its effects are at once

chimerical and fleeting. But what about Stevens, the poem's author? From his point of view, the song's failure is an occasion to investigate art's etiology and efficacy. The poem, in this way, does not simply reject a fantastic counterfactual; it uses a fantastic counterfactual to test art's instrumentality.

Results from this test are on display in "Credences of Summer." The poem's second canto presents a series of instructions:

Postpone the anatomy of summer, as
The physical pine, the metaphysical pine.
Let's see the very thing and nothing else.
Let's see it with the hottest fire of sight.
Burn everything not part of it to ash. (322)

The first two lines ask us to bracket the fact-value dichotomy. The next three, to concentrate our gaze on an unspecified object. Together the lines describe a point of view—a line of vision and a mental attitude. The canto concludes:

Trace the gold sun about the whitened sky
Without evasion by a single metaphor.
Look at it in its essential barrenness
And say this, this is the centre that I seek.
Fix it in an eternal foliage

And fill the foliage with arrested peace,
Joy of such permanence, right ignorance
Of change still possible. Exile desire
For what is not. This is the barrenness
Of the fertile thing that can attain no more.
(322–23)

These instructions have two aims. First, to imprint a scene on the mind's eye—the sun shining through a canopy of leaves. (The word "foliage" denotes the leaves of the trees and the leaves of the book we hold in our hands. We literally see through the pages of *Collected Poetry and Prose*.) Second, to preempt personal associations that might splinter our collective gaze. "[A]rrested peace" and "right ignorance" are occasions for synchrony—states of mind that we can all share. "Exile desire / For what is not" is a

demand for presentness. This is Stevens's latest experiment: to coordinate a new form of unanimity—a real, empirical unanimity. His hypothesis: if we adopt a common point of view—a point of view defined by the canto's viewing instructions—we will develop a common set of values.

The experiment, at its core, implies a critique of Wittgenstein's version of the fact-value dichotomy. This is the significance of "Let's see with the hottest fire of sight": the recognition that no person could present a "mere description" of anything. The line fuses subject and object, the act of perception and the thing perceived. The message is that we are integral to what we see. We do not have unmediated access to facts as such. Our perspective influences our perception of the world. Wittgenstein's omniscient world-book author is a fallacy.

This account of perception is by no means exceptional. Sebastian Gardner, Critchley, and Altieri all describe how Stevens rejects what Richard Rorty calls "sense-data empiricism"—the idea that sense perception provides unmediated access to a world of fact (1). Gardner details Stevens's affinity to transcendental idealism. Critchley links Stevens to Heidegger, among others (26–30). Altieri offers a powerful account of Stevens and phenomenology. Together these scholars provide a framework for understanding how Stevens rejects naive forms of empiricism without embracing equally naive forms of idealism.¹⁴

But what does this account of perception have to do with Stevens's experiment in "Credences of Summer" and his pursuit of value more generally? The account grounds his hypothesis that a common point of view will generate a common set of values. How? By illuminating a connection between our perception of facts and our judgments of value. Both activities are in some sense relative. Both reflect a frame of reference. For Stevens this connection (however vague) motivates another attempt to coordinate an alternative to nihilism.

One way to begin to explicate this connection and its significance for Stevens is to invoke Wilfrid Sellars's distinction between epistemic and nonepistemic facts in *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind* (1956). According to Sellars, epistemic facts are normative. "[T]he ability to recognize that something *looks green*," he writes, "presupposes the concept of *being green*" (43). This concept, in turn, presupposes a "long process of publicly reinforced responses to public objects . . . in public situations" (87). In contrast, nonepistemic facts are not normative: they do not rely on concepts and a history of "public situations." Such facts are the exclusive domain of the natural sciences and Wittgenstein's world-book author.

For Sellars epistemic facts are all we know. More than that: they are how we assimilate sense data.¹⁵ As John McDowell explains, "'[E]pistemic,' in Sellars's usage, acquires a sense that cuts loose from its etymological connection with knowledge. In the wider sense epistemic facts relate to world-directed thought as such, whether knowledge-involving or not" ("Sellars").¹⁶ To put this point another way: all our intentional acts rely on socially mediated concepts. Our engagement with norms is all-encompassing. To notice a falling rock or to condemn a murder is to rely on a complex history of social relations.

Does the hegemony of epistemic facts deny us access to the natural world? One aim of McDowell's reading of Sellars is to "exorcize" (rather than answer) anxieties about the relation between epistemic and nonepistemic facts. "In receiving impressions," McDowell claims, "a subject can be open to the way things manifestly are. This yields a satisfying interpretation for the image of postures that are answerable to the world through being answerable to experience" (*Mind* xx). Perception is both normative and responsive to the world as it is. Our minds do not deny us reality but allow us to access it through concepts. As a result, we can endorse a minimal empiricism

without accepting the implications of Wittgenstein's version of the fact-value dichotomy.

Does this description of epistemic facts justify Stevens's experiment? Is perception a viable site for value formation? In "Credences of Summer," Stevens does not give himself an opportunity to find out. Halfway through the poem, he retracts his call for unanimity. "The rock cannot be broken," he writes. "It is the truth" (324). In the final canto, he depicts an "inhuman author" who "does not hear his characters talk." In the final line, he laments the characters' "youthful happiness"—a happiness that fades with experience (326). The poem thus retreats from its experiment. Philosophical speculation cedes to metaphysical need. This is ultimately one source of the poem's power: Stevens's inability to fully grapple with his insight that our engagement with facts involves the stuff of value.

Yet the retreat does not mark the end of this particular experiment: Stevens's hypothesis in "Credences of Summer" returns in the poem's sequel, "The Auroras of Autumn."

[III]

In "The Auroras of Autumn," Stevens tries to focus our collective gaze on yet another skyscape—the aurora borealis. This time, however, he does not present a set of viewing instructions (as in "Credences of Summer"). Instead, he attempts to establish a common ground—a ground expansive enough to accommodate our disparate subject positions.

The canto opens in a nonplace that recalls the Garden of Eden and Plato's cave:

This is where the serpent lives, the bodiless.
His head is air. Beneath his tip at night
Eyes open and fix on us in every sky.

Or is this another wriggling out of the egg,
Another image at the end of the cave,
Another bodiless for the body's slough? (355)

The deictics work like puns: pointing to the sky and the auroras, to the poem and a canon

of poetry, to the book in our hands. The nouns work in a similar way. The serpent is Satan in the garden, and the knowledge and danger he represents. The serpent is also the serpentine designs in the sky and their green, serpentine color. The cave is Plato's cave of refracted images as well as an image of the night sky. The puns even thematize themselves: Eden's serpent and Plato's cave are sites of duplicity. If one attempts to catalog all these combinations, one ends up describing the act of interpretation—an effect that the poem seems to anticipate. The serpent's eyes "fix on us in every sky," which presumably includes our own.

Stevens seems overwhelmed by this proliferation of perspectives. Is this "another wriggling out of the egg," he asks, "Another image at the end of the cave, / Another bodiless for the body's slough?" The lines conflate images of rebirth and misapprehension, freedom and constraint. *Slough* (if pronounced "slou") suggests the Slough of Despond, in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In this reading, our bodies block any attempt to collectivize. But if pronounced "sləf," *slough* suggests a radical transformation: an act of abandoning our bodies for a collective "bodilessness." (Stevens pronounces the word "sləf" on a recording of the poem [*Voice*].) As we confront these images, we might remind ourselves that we are still reading a description of the auroras, which resemble a serpent shedding its serpentine slough.

This is how Stevens intends to establish a common ground: by offering a surplus of perspectives on the auroras. As David Wiggins notes, "Perspective is not a form of illusion, distortion, or delusion. All the different perspectives of a single array of objects are perfectly consistent with one another. Given a set of perspectives, we can recover, if only they be reliably collected, a unified true account of the shape, spatial relations, and relative dimensions of the objects in the array" (108). Do the perspectives in the canto

provide a "unified true account" of the auroras? The canto continues:

This is where the serpent lives. This is his nest,
These fields, these hills, these tinted
distances,
And the pines above and along and beside the
the sea. (355)

The view is cinematic: an aerial shot sweeps across the landscape, capturing the pines from above and then beside the sea. The perspectives are consistent: they seem to compose a plausible portrait of the auroras' compass.

The auroras are particularly well suited to sustain this proliferation of perspectives. As natural phenomena, they support empirical description. Fleeting and sublime, they license puns and other figures. Unlike earthquakes, they are intangible and unindexed by the landscape. (They do not leave evidence directly available to human perception in their wake.) And, unlike eclipses and clouds, they are unpredictable, rare, and geographically circumscribed.¹⁷ As a result, they justify a written record—insofar as a written record provides access to the event, after the event. Even more important, they bind percept with perceiver—descriptions of the auroras are descriptions of perceiving the auroras.

Yet Stevens quickly recognizes two threats to the experiment. First, there is the danger that the poem's descriptions will not be expansive enough. Second, there is the danger that they will be too expansive and dissolve our common ground and common object. Stevens thematizes these threats as he continues to describe the auroras:

This is form gulping after formlessness,
Skin flashing to wished-for disappearances
And the serpent body flashing without the
skin.

This is the height emerging and its base
These lights may finally attain a pole

In the midmost midnight and find the
serpent there,

In another nest, the master of the maze
Of body and air and forms and images,
Relentlessly in possession of happiness. (355)

The lines describe an asymptote: the poem “gulping after formlessness.” Stevens wants the act of reading the poem to be identical to the act of looking at the inconstant auroras. The problem, of course, is the materiality of the poem. For us the very thing that facilitates representation obstructs identity. “This” for Stevens designates the auroras and “The Auroras of Autumn.” For us “This” designates the poem only. He is the poem’s maker: master and occupant of the “maze / Of body and air and forms and images.” We are its occupants only. The difference establishes a hierarchy that makes developing a common ground difficult, if not impossible.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the poem’s proliferation of perspectives falters as soon as Stevens confronts this impasse:

This is his poison: that we should disbelieve
Even that. His meditations in the ferns,
When he moved so slightly to make sure of
sun,

Made us no less as sure.

As the serpent tests the sun by shifting under its rays, he makes “us no less as sure.” The statement tells us nothing about our certainty. The serpent’s poison is not disbelief but our awareness that his knowledge has no bearing on our own. The canto ends ambiguously: “We saw in his head, / Black beaded on the rock, the flecked animal, / The moving grass, the Indian in his glade” (355). Does the sentence present the auroras ranging over and patterning the rock, the grass, the “Indian in his glade”? Does it depict the serpent’s thoughts—Stevens’s thoughts? Does it picture a postaurora landscape with a black-beaded serpent weaving its way through the grass?

Does it describe the auroras? Does Stevens’s “we” include us? We cannot be certain.

The next three cantos all begin, “Farewell to an idea . . .” as though Stevens were saying farewell to his latest experiment (355–57). This is farewell to the idea of common ground and to ideas as such—for ideas unite us despite our different contexts. Stevens no longer looks to readers to resolve his metaphysical need. Instead, he looks inward and at the auroras. This is his next experiment: to give a comprehensive account of his personal experience. In the language of the poem, he aims to get to the “midmost midnight” of the auroras and find himself there: to describe the world so perfectly that he describes himself as well. This is happiness: union between mind and world—union that identifies his values as values in the world.

To delimit his experience of the auroras, Stevens no longer attempts to share his point of view. Solipsism becomes a strategy. But if this strategy is successful, how can we evaluate his experiment or even identify it as such? The answer is we cannot. All we can do is test my argument against other arguments about the poem and against the poem’s metacommentary. What follows is necessarily speculative.

A survey of Stevens scholarship reveals two standard responses to the poem: scholars miss its import or concede its impenetrability—sometimes both. Harold Bloom presents an uncharacteristically evasive account of the third canto and then admits that it “demonstrates so oddly original a mode of writing as to make critical description very difficult” (265). Frank Doggett and Dorothy Emerson note the poem’s “inner secrecy” (53). Joseph N. Riddel calls parts “bafflingly obscure” (235). Paraphrase is not the problem: the poem does not communicate a particular feeling that resists conceptualization. Hugh Kenner describes Ezra Pound’s *Cantos* as “apprehensible, not explicable”—“The Auroras of Autumn” is the opposite: explicable but seldom apprehensible (*Poetry* 200). One may identify references, but they rarely disclose their significance.

"The Auroras of Autumn" offers an account of its own difficulty when the "we" first returns in the fifth canto. The canto completes a suite of domestic scenes: the second presents a cabin on an isolated beach; the third, a mother figure; the fourth, variations on a regal, conflicted father. In the fifth, the mother and father orchestrate a festival. Stevens writes, "This then is Chatillon or as you please. / We stand in tumult of a festival" (358). As Eleanor Cook notes, Chatillon is Stevens's "possible ancestor" (*Reader's Guide* 240). For Stevens this is a domestic scene. For us it is simply as we please. Like the love of one family member for another, the scene's significance is unavailable to outsiders. Stevens and his readers both stand in "tumult of a festival," but the festivals are different. He stands in tumult of his auroras and self-descriptions; we stand in tumult of the poem. The poem's import is private—in the same way that love (erotic, familial) is private. Personal identity is a condition of meaning.¹⁸

The best evidence for this argument is ultimately your own experience of the poem. (A longer version of this essay would review additional scholarship on the poem.)¹⁹ Yet one reading provides an especially helpful picture of the poem's difficulty. In "Wallace Stevens and the King James Bible," Cook reads the poem's seventh canto, which begins:

Is there an imagination that sits enthroned
As grim as it is benevolent, the just
And the unjust, which in the midst of the
summer stops

To imagine winter? When the leaves are dead,
Does it take its place in the north and enfold
itself,
Goat-leaper, crystallized and luminous, sitting
In highest night? (360)

Cook examines how the image of the goat leaper as auroras coordinates a series of references. She cites the book of Ezekiel, Revelation, the bombing of Hiroshima, Shelley's

preface to *Hellas*, *Brewer's Dictionary*, Matthew, *As You Like It*, *As You Like It's* Ovid, Joyce, Milton, classical pastoral, and Hazlitt (244–49). The gloss depicts a lifetime of reading spurred into description by the auroras. I cannot imagine a better illustration of how description bifurcates to represent an act of perception and a percept.

Cook tells us almost everything we could possibly know about the image and its construction. We only miss extratextual elements—the feel of Stevens's chair, the typography of his *Hellas*. Yet, despite this knowledge, my experience of the canto departs radically from my experience of the poem's first canto—and "Sunday Morning," "The Idea of Order at Key West," and "Credences of Summer." I marvel at the canto's beauty, but I cannot empathize with Stevens—I cannot imaginatively re-create his point of view. (I expect your experiences are similar.) Cook's conclusions are ultimately mundane: "A whole series of associations . . .," she writes, "works retrospectively to undo the jettied tragedy of goats, their black destiny." Stevens is "separating out New Testament pastoral from classical pastoral, where goats enjoy life. He is moving against the entire great force of Christian pastoral tradition . . ." (249). This reading may be accurate (it reconfirms Stevens's view of Christianity), but it does not begin to make sense of the care and skill that seem to have gone into the poem's composition.

Does "The Auroras of Autumn" resolve Stevens's metaphysical need? I do not know. But my uncertainty is revealing: unlike Stevens's previous experiments, the poem does not announce its own inadequacy. Instead, it maintains its investment in the auroras as a medium for union between mind and world. One could argue that the poem is meaningless for all involved or a puzzle still waiting to be solved. But such arguments do not account for the poem's strange difficulty or its relation to Stevens's earlier work—how it translates an insight into normativity into an experiment in description.

This is my argument: if the poem makes something happen, it happens for Stevens alone. Its efficacy is radically asymmetrical.

What can readers learn from such an inaccessible poem? “The Auroras of Autumn” suggests a new way to understand aesthetic difficulty and literary efficacy and their interrelation. Standard explanations for aesthetic difficulty are inapplicable or insufficient—political resistance, defamiliarization, elitism. Likewise, standard conceptions of literary efficacy—symbolic action, negative critique, sympathetic identification. The poem is not (or not only) a reaction against reification or an instrument of provocation or persuasion. It is an attempt to construct a community of one—a community in which relative judgments of value are absolute judgments of value. The poem’s success hinges on its inaccessibility.

In the context of Stevens’s career, the poem also offers a way to understand what we mean when we describe a poem as experimental or a poet as thinking in verse. The transition between the first and second cantos reveals a mind in action. Stevens is learning from his poem as he shapes it. Failure is a form of inspiration—an opportunity to renegotiate his approach to the problem of value. The process defines Stevens’s career as a whole. From *Harmonium* (1923) to the poems collected in *Opus Posthumous* (1957), he tests and retests how the best words in the best order might resolve his metaphysical need. Poetry is at once a means and an end—a way to identify value and a value in itself.

But the poem does not offer any practical lessons to readers. It does not even teach us how to resolve our own metaphysical need. Its response to the fact-value dichotomy is not pedagogical or redemptive. It is not philosophical. After the first canto, Stevens constructs a world beyond justification, reciprocity, ideas—a world without a we. His response to the problem of value is thoroughly singular.²⁰

So why publish the poem? Most banally, that is what poets do—they publish. But also

the poem exploits its audience as it alienates it. By recognizing Stevens’s descriptions of the auroras as descriptions of the auroras, we tacitly confirm his values (without understanding their specific content). The poem establishes a transitive relation between the value of the auroras and Stevens’s values in the world. To marvel uncomprehendingly at his goat leaper is to endorse the legitimacy of his experiment.

Tracking Stevens’s experience of his own poetry reveals a series of extravagant experiments. An attempt to confirm the sufficiency of relative judgments of value in “Sunday Morning” leads to a fantastic counterfactual in “The Idea of Order at Key West.” An insight into normativity in “Credences of Summer” leads to a strategic solipsism in “The Auroras of Autumn.” This is the result (and cost) of Stevens’s experimentation: a hermetic poem and a hermetic world. “The Auroras of Autumn” succeeds (possibly) because it sacrifices the very thing “Sunday Morning” and his other poems hold most dear: community. Self-making becomes a form of world making (and vice versa), and readers lose access to Stevens’s point of view.

This essay presents two narratives about Stevens’s point of view and the centrality (and eventual attenuation) of point of view in his poetry. Together they tell a story of a career. Stevens is a skeptic, embracing a series of increasingly extravagant experiments in an attempt to create a livable form of secularism. His engagement with a major philosophical problem leads him to abandon philosophy. But this is not the only story one could tell. The poems collected in *Opus Posthumous*, for example, present a pragmatic approach to the problem of value. (One could argue that “The Course of a Particular” achieves McDowell’s desired exorcism—but that is an argument for a different essay.) I mention this point to emphasize that Stevens’s experiments are not always unilinear. Ultimately, what matters to this essay is not only a series of readings and

theoretical arguments but also a method and a premise—that close attention to Stevens's poetry reveals how his anxieties about the fact-value dichotomy drive his writing and re-writing and his constant writing about writing.

NOTES

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1. Wittgenstein gave the lecture to the Heretic Society in Cambridge—a general audience with “no particular interest or training in philosophy” (Klagge and Nordmann 361). For information on the lecture (and for the lecture itself), see Wittgenstein. For a more detailed account of the occasion, see Klagge and Nordmann 361–62.

2. For a brief history of the fact-value dichotomy, see Putnam 14–19.

3. Quotations of poetry and prose by Stevens are from *Collected Poetry and Prose*, unless otherwise indicated.

4. 36, 110, 116, 117, 333, 333, 350, 396, 415, 415, 442, 449, 451, 476.

5. Introducing the concept of metaphysical need, Schopenhauer writes, “Temples and churches, pagodas and mosques, in all lands, and in all ages, testify, in their splendor and grandeur, to that human need for metaphysics which follows, strong and ineradicable, upon the heels of physical need” (184).

6. Eeckhout provides an introduction to the philosophical stakes of Stevens's poetry and an overview of philosophical approaches to his work. As Eeckhout notes, Stevens is usually “considered the most philosophical among modernist poets in English” (103). For a rigorous account of Stevens's contribution to philosophy (and vice versa), see the introduction to Altieri.

7. As Helen Vendler repeatedly emphasizes in her work, “Stevens is our great poet of the inexhaustible and exhausting cycle of desire and despair.” “Never was there a more devout believer,” she writes, “—in love, in the transcendent, in truth, in poetry. . . . And never was there a more corrosive disbeliever—disillusioned in love, de-

prived of religious belief, and rejecting in disgust at their credulousness the ‘trash’ of previous poems . . .” (Wallace Stevens 39–41).

8. “Cruel optimism,” writes Lauren Berlant, “names a relation of attachment to compromised conditions of possibility. What is cruel about these attachments, and not merely inconvenient or tragic, is that the subjects who have *x* in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the *content* of the attachment, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world” (21).

9. The ending of the final version of the poem differs from the ending of the one published in *Poetry* magazine in 1915. Stevens submitted the full (and final) version to *Poetry*, but Harriet Monroe, the magazine's editor, asked if she could publish cantos 1, 4, 5, 7, and 8. Stevens acquiesced and suggested the following order: 1, 8, 4, 5, 7. The redacted version, thus, ends with the community of men and a completely different perspective on metaphysical need.

10. For an account of the validity of a claim related to “death is the mother of beauty,” see Williams.

11. The question places us squarely in the realm of what W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., and Monroe C. Beardsley call “author psychology.” (“There is criticism of poetry,” they claim, “and there is author psychology” [10].) In their view, critics should bracket “the author's attitude toward his work, the way he felt, what made him write”—the very concerns that motivate this essay (4). My view is that to follow this advice would be to ignore a central feature of Stevens's poetry: how it relies on author psychology to evaluate its efficacy. Stevens's poetry is literally about the poet's attitude toward his work. Accordingly, it asks us to privilege his sense of adequacy over our own.

12. Fernandez's appearance in the poem is also a repudiation of another form of collective action: communism. In the months leading up to the publication of “The Idea of Order at Key West” in *Alcestis* in October 1934, Fernandez, a prominent French critic, published a series of responses to the 6 February riots in Paris, including an open letter to André Gide in *La nouvelle revue française* (a magazine Stevens read regularly) and a personal commentary in *Commune*, which was quickly translated and published in *Partisan Review* as “I Came Near Being a Fascist.” (Walter Benjamin quotes a passage from the open letter as the epigraph to his 1934 lecture “The Author as Producer.”) The responses narrate Fernandez's conversion from “une éthique de droite” (“an ethic of the right”) to an unaffiliated Marxism to a committed communism (708). “The Idea of Order at Key West” rewrites this conversion by including Fernandez in a community formed in response to an aesthetic experience rather than class consciousness. Late in his career, Stevens denied the allusion. “When I was trying to think of a Spanish name

for *The Idea of Order*,” he wrote Renato Poggioli in 1951, “I simply put together by chance two exceedingly common names. . . . The real Fernandez used to write feuilletons in one of the Paris weeklies and it is true that I used to read these. But I did not consciously have him in mind” (*Letters* 823). The denial corroborates Hugh Kenner’s claim that “[t]he Stevens world is empty of people” (*Homemade World* 75). For two additional accounts of Fernandez’s role in the poem, see Longenbach 161–63 and Surette 199–232.

13. Michael Szalay makes a similar point in his reading of “The Idea of Order at Key West.” The poem, he argues, presents an “inquiry into the origin of phenomena—such as collectivities, economies and . . . poems—that cannot be understood as having, or being the product of, an individual mind” (125).

14. A range of philosophical traditions are relevant to this discussion of Stevens’s critique of sense-data empiricism (and to his avoidance of naive forms of idealism). One could, e.g., cite Kant’s claim that “[t]houghts without content are empty, intuitions without concepts are blind” (193–94) or Peirce’s insight that “there is no thing which is in-itself in the sense of not being relative to the mind, though things which are relative to the mind doubtless are, apart from that relation” (155). With respect to the second canto of “Credences of Summer,” Husserl’s practice of *epoché* (or phenomenological reduction or bracketing) is apposite. Indeed, one could argue that the canto attempts to motivate a strange, collective *epoché*. Finally, one could cite Stevens himself. In his essay “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words” (1942), he writes, “The subject-matter of poetry is not that ‘collection of solid, static objects extended in space’ but life that is lived in the scene that it composes; and so reality is not that external scene but the life that is lived in it. Reality is things as they are” (658).

15. In *Empiricism and the Philosophy of Mind*, Sellars famously writes, “Now the idea that epistemic facts can be analyzed without remainder—even ‘in principle’—into non-epistemic facts, whether phenomenal or behavioral, public or private, with no matter how lavish a sprinkling of subjunctives and hypotheticals is, I believe, a radical mistake . . .” (19).

16. In *Mind and World*, McDowell presents a more sophisticated version of the same claim: “Conceptual capacities, whose interrelations belong in the *sui generis* logical space of reasons, can be operative not only in judgments—results of a subject’s actively making up her mind about something—but already in the transactions in nature that are constituted by the world’s impacts on the receptive capacities of a suitable subject: that is, one who possesses the relevant concepts” (xx).

17. As Eleanor Cook notes, “The auroras are unpredictable in their occurrence and in their trajectory, unlike the stars and the planets; they come in the autumn and in the north, but no one can predict exactly when or where . . .” (“Wallace Stevens” 244).

18. To clarify this point: person *x* could know everything there is to know about lovers *y* and *z* and still not

be able to comprehend their love for each other. Identity, not knowledge, is the impediment.

19. For additional readings of the poem, see, e.g., Altieri 186–89; Berger 34–80; Costello 73–85; Perloff 18–23; and Vendler, *On* 231–68.

20. Is Stevens’s response to the problem of value in “The Auroras of Autumn” desirable—or even reasonable? Is a community of one really a community at all? I am reluctant to say—although the easy answer to these questions is certainly no. One could also ask whether Thoreau’s experiment at Walden and in *Walden* is desirable or reasonable—but to do so would risk missing the significance of his project.

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Djuna Barnes and the Geriatric Avant-Garde

SCOTT HERRING

FOR MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS, WE HAVE WATCHED DJUNA BARNES age unsuccessfully. In September 1940, Barnes rented a Greenwich Village studio apartment that she occupied until 18 June 1982, when she died at the age of ninety. The opening sentence of a *New York Times* obituary published two days thereafter stated what many still presume: Barnes was “a recluse whose avant-garde literary work won wide acclaim in the 1920’s and 30’s” (Daley). Her innovative peak, the obituary posits, was back then—in the heyday of high modernism, when she mingled with James Joyce, Natalie Barney, and other artists in western Europe—not in the later years when Barnes apparently walled herself up in 5 Patchin Place, a one-room residence on a dead-end street known for housing luminaries such as E. E. Cummings (fig. 1). It is as if her creative life stopped once her apartment life began. My essay casts doubt on this portrait of the artist as an aging recluse.

The *Times* cannot assume sole credit for the caricature, given that numerous posthumous assessments advanced similar representations. Take but two examples. In his 1983 biography *Djuna: The Life and Times of Djuna Barnes*, Andrew Field finds that Barnes’s artistry extinguished itself: “The silence, then, was not a sudden turn in her life but simply a potentiality that came to the fore when various other things such as sense of self, love, accomplishment, and fame had in one way or the other played themselves out” (21). In his 1990 memoir “*Life Is Painful, Nasty, and Short . . . In My Case It Has Only Been Painful and Nasty*,” Hank O’Neal likewise recalls Patchin Place’s “mysterious and reclusive world” to record “a room full of despair, disarray, and confusion. It appears to be a place shut away

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from time, but the ravages of time are there” (xvi, 10). He concludes that “the peculiarity of the second half of her life, particularly the final years, is without parallel in the history of American literature and tends to overshadow some of her other achievements” (xvi). For O’Neal, late Barnes is better known for enfeeblement than experimentalism. As one of the oldest old—a clinical term from gerontology referring to “those aged 85 and over”—she appears in his version as a “shut-in” coasting on the fumes of her 1936 modernist classic *Nightwood* (Suzman and Riley 177; O’Neal 82).¹

Admittedly, her later publications are few, especially if we do not count the post-obit *Creatures in an Alphabet*. The last quarter of her life saw Barnes publish one play, *The*

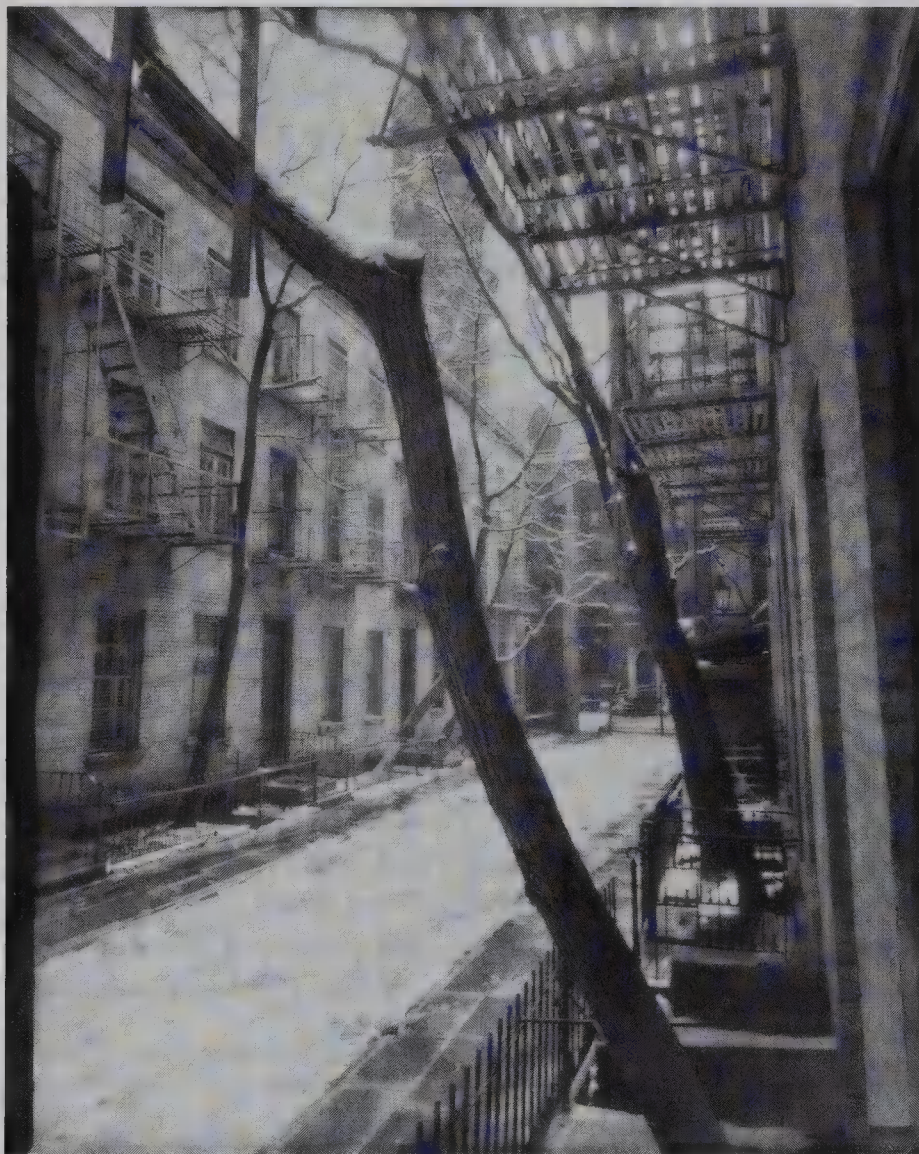
Antiphon, along with five poems amounting to forty-four lines of verse: “Fall-out over Heaven,” in 1958 (ten lines); “Galerie Religieuse,” in 1962 (twelve lines); “Quarry,” in 1969 (nine lines); and “The Walking-Mort,” in 1971 (ten lines). In 1982, the year after she received a National Endowment for the Arts senior fellowship, her final publication added up to the three lines of “Work-in-Progress: Rite of Spring.” Glancing over this bibliography, one would be hard-pressed to call Barnes prolific, but the negative and long-standing conclusions that biographers, reviewers, critics, and lay readers infer from these paltry sums underestimate the complexities of her later-life work. Such conclusions overlook myriad aesthetic experimentations that she

undertook during her residency at Patchin Place, and they neglect hundreds of vanguard productions that were not published but were archived following her death. How, then, to combat the pervasive and gerontophobic image of Barnes as an aging recluse who had laid down her pen?

To answer this question, I shift focus from her minimal literary output to her maximal creative efforts by concentrating not on her published late poems but on the late-life work in toto. Special Collections at the University of Maryland’s Hornbake Library houses many of these materials, whose extensive reach scholars have largely passed over.² Even the editors of her later poems, Phillip Herring and Osías Stutman, note that their 2005 *Collected Poems* compresses these copious writings into seventy-four discrete units under the heading “Late Unpublished Poems (ca. 1950–82)” (147). This essay traces what happens when that tally increases to

FIG. 1

Berenice Abbott,
*Patchin Place with
Jefferson Market
Court in Background,
Greenwich Village,
New York City, New
York, circa 1945.*
Masters Collection /
Getty Images.



at least 2,400 drafts as well as miscellaneous writings that Barnes mixed between them. I thus concentrate on the artist's manifold compositional endeavors—her bountiful poem revisions, her marginalia, her typescript headings, and the links between the documents in the Hornbake fonds—to argue that the second half of her lifework was an aesthetic achievement that gives the lie to deep-seated representations of Barnes's creative drought.

I consider the artist's Patchin Place output not as the waning of her earlier modernist efforts but as their intensification. My critical approach does not sidestep Barnes's oftentimes astringent personality or blindly champion her aging, but it does offset portrayals of her senility as they inform receptions of her craft.³ In so doing, I embrace her abundant writings as a variation on what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, borrowing a phrase from Barbara Herrnstein Smith, refers to as "a senile sublime": "more or less intelligible performances by old brilliant people, whether artists, scientists, or intellectuals, where the bare outlines of a creative idiom seem finally to emerge from what had been the obscuring puppy fat of personableness, timeliness, or sometimes even of coherent sense" (24). Barnes's "creative idiom," we will discover, showcases the elderly artist rehearsing and revising key components of high modernism—innovation, experimentalism, novelty, and difficulty—across seemingly disparate mediums such as poetry, grocery store requests, pharmacy orders, private letters, and memoranda. Instead of confirming Barnes as a stifled senior, my thesis proposes that careful attention to these profuse writings reveals her time spent at 5 Patchin Place as a sublime achievement akin to a geriatric avant-garde.

[I]

Let us return briefly to O'Neal, whose recollections nevertheless remain one of the most extensive depictions of the artist during her

final years. According to his reminiscence, O'Neal first met Barnes in the fall of 1978. When he entered her Patchin Place apartment, he found the artist's desk "littered with piles of papers, drafts of poems, grocery lists, old bank statements, and thousands of other scraps of paper—all saved for no apparent reason" (7). Over the years Barnes had collated scores of poem drafts in and alongside revised foodstuff orders for the Greenwich Village grocery store Jefferson Market, pharmacy lists for C. O. Bigelow Chemists, and other personalia. This accrual displeases O'Neal, who attempts to standardize these productions into a conservative publication rhythm beyond her "hoarding every scrap of paper" (175). Exasperated with her "idleness," he wants her "to get on with the poems" (124, 78).

This fairly commonplace account seems shortsighted in its understanding of Barnes's writing regime. It is important to remember that O'Neal's depiction—one that Barnes's later editors enforce when they refer to her unpublished works as "chaos"—is a biographical construction rather than a biographical fact (Herring and Stutman, *Introd.* 9).⁴ The two editors, observes Daniela Caselli, "have indeed talked of chaos as a result of these hard to track creative practices; such an interpretation is possible at the price of assuming a degree of incompetence (due, for instance, to old age), but cannot hold from a textual perspective" (84). Taking guidance from these astute remarks, I am intrigued by the pejorative assumptions that undergird retellings of Barnes's old age and her intricate later writings. While her aging and her compositions are without doubt inextricable, the former is too often thought to undermine the latter.

Two complementary fields of inquiry—age studies and life writing theory—contextualize this deprecation. There seems to be at work what the age studies theorist Margaret Morganroth Gullette terms a *decline narrative*, a normative cultural script that stigmatizes old age as little more than a terminal life

stage marked by inescapable corporeal and creative fading (*Aged* 13). While Gullette acknowledges the biological shifts that occur as a life accrues more days, she insists that aging is as much a dynamic cultural production as it is a biological phenomenon and that those categorized in “old age imaginaries” in modern and late modern Western cultures are often cast as losing their aesthetic capabilities when they might more appropriately be seen as heightening them (*Aged* 184; “Creativity” 19). Gullette refers to this as “age ideology” or “decline ideology” (*Aged* 18, 38), and the theoretical intervention that her concepts accomplish is in response to the biases of what the gerontologist Robert N. Butler named “ageism” in 1968 (11) and what the literary critic Kathleen Woodward called “the ideology of the aging body” in 1991 (*Aging* 19). Joined by Leerom Medovoi, a cultural critic, as well as social historians such as Carole Haber, Howard Chudacoff, W. Andrew Achenbaum, and others, these scholars question maxims surrounding old age that contribute to the sociocultural ether of gerontophobia—the inverse of Sedgwick’s senile sublime and an ideology that undergirds representations of elderly persons when they are cast, like Barnes, as incompetent, antisocial, and slouching toward “creative decline” (Gullette, “Creativity” 20).

As but one antidote to these ageist cruelties, Gullette offers “critical age auto/biography,” a mode of “life storytelling” that grants “some narrative agency, some way of squeezing out from under subjections” of decline ideology (*Aged* 39, 154, 125). With phrasing explicitly indebted to life writing theory, Gullette nods to how scholars of modern biography and autobiography—particularly feminist critics—shed light on Barnes’s later projects. Indeed, as much as age theorists query social formulas that dismiss this life-course stage, critics in fields such as biography theory note how genres of life writing ripple with representational dangers and

possibilities. This is what the Personal Narratives Group, a feminist collective, refers to as “the dynamics of power relations, and in particular the power inequalities between men and women,” that saturate memoir, autobiography, and, especially, biography as these literatures navigate the rocky social terrain of publishers, editors, and readers (6). Writes Barbara Johnson in a biting epigram that encapsulates the textual hazards of these genres, “[W]hoever owns the life, the biographer always seizes it transgressively” (120).⁵

Well before O’Neal introduced himself, Barnes was no stranger to vexations of editorial interference over her life writing in particular and her creative writing in general. Much of her art drew deep from the well of personal experience (recall her 1914 journalist report “How It Feels to Be Forcibly Fed”; her romance with Thelma Wood, coded into *Nightwood*; her 1928 Left Bank lesbian-coterie satire *Ladies Almanack*; and her inscription of incest trauma into *The Antiphon*). Her artistic life was spent negotiating male publishers and editors in attempts to publish these avant-garde productions. Barnes relied, for example, on T. S. Eliot to twist Faber and Faber’s arm to accept *Nightwood*. Eliot became so engrossed in that novel’s revisions that Barnes wrote to her friend Emily Coleman in 1936 that his supervision was “a beast” (qtd. in Plumb, *Introd.* xxiii).⁶ The feminist critic and life writing theorist Miriam Fuchs reveals that Barnes again found herself beholden to Eliot while drafting *The Antiphon* and attempting to secure a publication venue for the play. Fuchs convincingly finds that the two ensnared themselves in “an unequal power relationship,” in which Barnes was forced to perform as “the grateful, compliant author” (“Djuna Barnes” 289, 304).⁷ The elder Barnes “felt she could not trust anyone. Even her great friend T. S. Eliot let her down.” When Field asked Barnes for guidance on his biography, “she refused to help him and did not approve of his endeavor” (Page 112, 138).

She had developed a “fierce distrust of publishers” (Herring 311). Throughout much of her creative life, Barnes rarely had sufficient charge over her semiautobiographical works since her life storytelling was perpetually fraught with gendered imbalances.

When we keep these long-standing complications in mind, Barnes’s minimal publications following the release of *The Antiphon* make more sense. While a list of verses that O’Neal agreed on with the artist established a baseline for the posthumous *Collected Poems*, Barnes’s refusal “to get on” with these writings protested her enduring difficulties of life storytelling across genres (Herring and Stutman, Introd. 16). Her supposed incapacity to cease revising seems a strategic recalcitrance given her tiresome experiences with editorial impingement. As Barnes wrote to Coleman in another 1936 letter documenting her trials with *Nightwood*, she longed “to have my life to myself to do my work in” (qtd. in Plumb, Introd. viii), and she largely shielded herself from the burdens of publication at Patchin Place. Beholden to personal experience, her radical aesthetic experimentations in Greenwich Village continued apace, but for the most part she bypassed editors and drafted with minimal intrusion.

Building on the work of Gullette, Woodward, Fuchs, and others, I recast Barnes’s supposedly reclusive writings from the late 1950s onward as a personal poetics of “conscious aging,” resistant to the frequently gendered pressures of publishing, that carried forth an avant-gardism whose execution “replaces the narrative of decline and degeneration with one of agency through aging” (Smith and Watson 151).⁸ What some interpret as obstinacy, neurosis, or pathological perfectionism was as likely the effect of her immersing herself, with pleasure and relief, in ongoing innovation that did not necessarily terminate in publication, as well as of a commitment to incompleteness that undermined the decline narrative. This recasting challenges misogynistic

sketches of the female artist as embittered, a stereotype that Barnes herself sometimes inhabited in public interviews and private correspondence.⁹ When we view her through the lens of age studies and studies of biography and autobiography, however, we find a Barnes who was not remiss at socializing or writing. Hence, as much as *Nightwood* draws on Barnes’s relationship with Wood or *The Antiphon* on her childhood family relations, so do her voluminous drafts resemble an experimentalist age autobiography, one “refusing to be controlled by an audience” and one whose noncompliance was indebted to modernist tenets (Broe, Introd. 5). I turn now to the aesthetic intricacies of this decades-in-the-making project.

[II]

Scant word counts and a lamentable cultural formula of seniority were not the only possible ways of defining Barnes after 1940. In *A Festschrift for Djuna Barnes on Her 80th Birthday*, the editor Frances McCullough finds that Barnes’s “room, light and airy, is filled with all sorts of incredible things, but most of all with *work*; her paintings, her papers, the poems she is currently writing, whatever.” In contrast to a decline narrative, McCullough describes a studio full of activity. Surveying these papers after visiting the University of Maryland’s archives seventeen years before the release of *Collected Poems*, Nancy J. Levine likewise contends that an “editor would have to make the kind of decisions that could result in an arbitrary version of coherence—pretty, but not what Barnes would have preferred” (187).¹⁰ These are exceptions to prevailing representations of Barnes as an inhibited elder, and I expand on their insights to hypothesize what Barnes “preferred,” given that the artist “wrote so much and burnt so little” (Stimpson 373).

A visit to the university’s holdings reveals the magnitude of what McCullough

and Levine encountered. The Special Collections staff acquired a substantial amount of Barnes's writings for \$48,000 in 1973. In 1977 the university proposed to pay \$6,000 for more materials and wrote regarding Barnes's "current working projects" that "University counsel suggests that you add a provision to your will that these manuscripts should be offered to the University for \$1,800.00" (Bocaccio). In a portion of one of her will drafts dated 20 May 1980, Barnes asks that her brother Saxon "have charge of all my finished and unfinished manuscripts. If he cannot make them out, destroy them: if he can, to send them to Mr. Robert Beare, of the McKel-din Library, of the University of Maryland" (Will). Her last will and testament altered from this earlier version, but the final tally of later manuscripts that the university acquired totaled more than two thousand pages. Most show Barnes using a combination of type-writing and handwriting to compose her works and ballpoint pens and magic markers in an array of colors—black, red, brown, green, blue, orange, pink, and purple—to edit them. These details, we will see, are not incidental to understanding her late-life craft. When submitted to Special Collections, her materials were chronologically jumbled, and Barnes left no extant plan for their consolidation. While she assigned some drafts a date, the timelines of other compositions remain difficult to identify (*circa* and *undated* appear often in these archives). The university categorized these unsystematic manuscripts over two and a half decades and explained that "an attempt was made to bring some order to Barnes's poetry" ("Djuna Barnes Papers").

While the Special Collections staff compartmentalized Barnes's writing into units, these papers repeatedly blur distinctions between a finished and an unfinished work, a singular poem and a poem cycle, and a completed long poem and its working notes.¹¹ A prime example is a typescript that the university lists as "Dereliction" and that Barnes

dates 1 June 1970 (fig. 2). Folder archives record that Barnes tinkered on this piece between 1967 and 1974. Assessing its title changes leads to interpretive vertigo: "Delection," "Parthenogenesis," "Cassation," "Derelict Spring," "Phantom Spring," "Scavenger Spring," "Virgin Spring," "Song of the Fool, or Resurrection Pie," "Dereliction, Parthenogenesis, and Phantom Spring," "Discant: Dereliction, Parthengogenesis, and Phantom Spring," and so forth. There are more than eleven hundred revisions of this poem, most unpaginated, and a few nearly unreadable because of their extensive markups. On this particular draft, Barnes wrote numbers in the marginalia in the top right corner, doodled in the top left corner, struck out words, crossed out handwritten edits, and revised her name ("Dereliction"). Undoubtedly well meaning, Herring and Stutman reduce the disorderly richness of this process when they reproduce it as a singular piece of poetry, making a "ruthless selection of a poem from its innumerable variants" (Caselli 83).

Barnes reflected on the fact that she never singularized or finalized this poem. This is not to neglect that she facilitated the release of some compositions. For instance, a folder dated 1970 and titled "Faber and Faber Poems" includes versions of "Discant," "Quarry," and what would become "The Walking-Mort" in an unfulfilled attempt to cull a collection for the publishing house. But even the writings included in this collection are greatly revised, as is almost every document in the archives, including, ironically, those in a folder entitled "Miscellaneous Completed Poems."¹² These revisions, I suggest, constitute a metacommentary on her writing processes, one that explicitly theorizes her Patchin Place papers as a decades-long experimental art project that would result in something other than publication. This reveals itself in her practice of grouping poems under headings like "Item taken from Poems in Passing" and "Work in Progress"

FIG. 2
Djuna Barnes,
"Dereliction. Pro Vita
Sua of (Parasites,
Parthogenesis, and
Spectre Spring.)"
Special Collections,
University of Mary-
land Libraries.

June I-1970.

Dereliction.
Pro Vita Sua
of
(Parasites, Parthogenesis, and Spectre Spring.)

Descant No. 1.

Meadow Wreck

Should any ask what bale her tender mark,
Why to the profit of the parasite be fed,
This ancient wreck, this cattle faced pucelle,
(A sparrow in its mouth) but not for burial?
In truth say what Dante said:
"Where my body fell, my bones alone" were staid;-
But of the hundred and odd bones of the maid?
What of the hundredth and the third
Jaw-bone of the Word?
And yet- what Prime mover did mischief spawn
Should any ask what mischief did she spawn,
Be brief:
Say Phaethon, who stood in fail
Upon the leaf;
Enfolding the moon,
To what trim of larva
To what Spell of larva, brub or grief,
What aphid and its clew-
What belly-butting horn its honeydew
That stabs its wing into the death,
That any passing fly androgynous,
The pawl and thief
That rigs her down to death earth
That any lattice-loving heir and sparkthief
The Androgynous who stands upon the wheel
The pawl and that rigs her down to earth
The sweet dabbling of the predator
Of every passing fly, the epicene
Of trebelous, halting Daphne
Stairing in the back

Nimbus this phase about the head
Phizz
Rhaze
Concession in a cradle
Vagant
Djuna Barnes,
5 Patchin Place,
New York, N.Y. 10011.

8-11
Paradise
Pencil
Sediment
Time
To bring
Branch
whose
mischief
shall
be
spawn
of whom
as contemplation?
KINDLING
Horne
over
down
in its hide
at earth to earth
great
as to on her arm
a field away
with monuments
where sleep & kids -
forebears have
beats her away
over

PHASE
RISING
the
racial
upheld
that
caducity
NID
Rise also to
have close to
Job her line
Parasite
Squall (spine)
Sullen
Spawn of

the machine
with
why test
what has been heard
Prime Mover
PRIMUM MOBILE
what has been heard
Prime Mover
did mischief spawn
To bring
Branch
whose
mischief
shall
be
spawn
of whom
as contemplation?
KINDLING
Horne
over
down
in its hide
at earth to earth
great
as to on her arm
a field away
with monuments
where sleep & kids -
forebears have
beats her away
over

despite the poems' protean titles. Likewise, under a draft of the last poem published during her lifetime—what would appear as “Work-in-Progress: Rite of Spring”—she types, “Twenty years trying to finish this poem” (“Rite” [fig. 3]). What if we read this sentence fragment not as an end to torment (eleven months per word) but as a mission statement? Finishing the drafts was beside the point, and even this short piece was further revised before the literary magazine *Grand Street* published it in 1982.

The sublimity of this late-life project becomes clearer after examination of an earlier draft, lines of which had initially appeared in revisions of “Dereliction” (fig. 4). Barnes first types five lines, two of which she strikes out:

Man cannot purge his body of its its theme
v As can the silkworm,,on a running thread
~~As can the silkworm, on a running thread,~~
~~Spin a Shroud to re_consider in~~
Spin a shroud to re-consider in.

Underneath these verses, Barnes's typescript then reads verbatim:

Submitted to “The New Yorker”
A totally new idea, as a poem “in progress,” asz Joyce's “Work in progress” ~~merely~~ was to become “Finnigan's Wake”. Tho Howaed Moss, [poetry editor of that magazine] was too stupid to see. He wanted it, but only if I would change one word. I would not. Thus the booby Moss was too v stupid to see, ~~thus~~ + lost the first new move, in poetry- a poem waiting, to be continued.
(“Work”)

FIG. 3

Djuna Barnes,
“Rite of Spring,”
Special Collections,
University of Mary-
land Libraries.

I first note the irony of Barnes's emphatic refusal to “change one word” as she crosses out two lines of a five-line poem whose primary “theme” is getting old. I second observe how this document typifies her scorn for editors as it emphasizes “*its* right to tell *its* stories

its way” (Gullette, *Aged* 194). I third underscore that in lieu of a despondent muddle of papers, Barnes offers what she considers a well-executed “first new move” in the field of twentieth-century poetics—precisely what Levine discovered when she combed through the then unprocessed archive. While I am wary of falling into an intentional fallacy, I take Barnes's expressed intentions at face value. Instead of getting on with her poems, she grandiosely conceives of their composition as a textual performance that advances the modernist avant-garde to which she earlier contributed: “[a] totally new idea” in which published output is purposely scanty, in which papers and drafts of poems accrue more and more, in which writing is a revolutionary state of perpetual revision (“Work”).

Whether Barnes is correct in her assessment of this project's singularity or originality is, to my mind, less important than is the act of producing these literary performances.¹³ Other modernists, such as Ezra Pound, Louis Zukofsky, and Barnes's close acquaintance Marianne Moore, engaged in similar long-term poetic projects, as did later poets, such as Charles Olson. Pound drafted, edited, and published versions of his cantos between approximately 1915 and 1968; Zukofsky worked on and released sections of “A” from 1928 to 1974; Moore maintained a “verse of endless process” (Schulze 123); and portions of Olson's incomplete *The Maximus Poems* saw release across decades.¹⁴ Barnes casts her aesthetic projects as a poetic furtherance of James Joyce's narratological experimentations in his 1939 novel *Finnegans Wake* (originally titled “Work in Progress” because Joyce composed the text for sixteen years).¹⁵ Imagining her unfinished papers as “totally new” achievements always in the making, Barnes relies on an earlier hallmark of Anglo-American modernism—Ezra Pound's directive to “renew thyself daily, utterly, make it new, and again new, make it new” (12)¹⁶—to conceive of her Patchin Place

May 25, 1980

Djuna Barnes,

5, Patchin Place,

New York, N.Y. 10011.

Rite of Spring.

Man cannot purge his body of its theme,
As can the silkworm, on a running thread,
Spin a shroud to re-consider in.

Twenty years trying to finish this poem.

Work in progress

Rife of Spring

Man cannot purge his body of its its theme
v As can the silkworm,, on a running thread

~~As can the silkworm,, on a running thread,~~

~~Spin a shroud to re-consider in.~~

Spin a shroud to re-consider in.

Submitted to "The New Yorker "

A totally new idea, as a poem "in progress," as ~~X~~ Joyce's
~~was~~
"Work in progress" ~~ready~~ to become "Finnigan's Wake".

Tho Howard Moss, poetry editor of that magazine Y
was too stupid to see. He wanted it, but only if I would
change one word. I would not. Thus the booby Moss was
too/ stupid to see, ~~thus~~ lost the first new move, in poetry-
a poem waiting, to be continued.

poems as novelties incomprehensible to a contemporary editor such as Moss.

This practice accords well with Hannah Sullivan's observation that modernist writers "used revision . . . not for stylistic tidying-up but to *make it new*" (2). In an argument that historicizes and theorizes "*modernist revisions*," Sullivan suggests that corrective draft overhauls were part and parcel of modernist authorship (266).¹⁷ Tirelessly working on a day-old draft or, in some instances, a decades-old draft, an aging Barnes continues this tradition when she feels her older writings to be utterly new and energizes them with unending alteration. What reads like confusion to a "booby" editor is instead "a tightrope experimentalism" to be never completed or, stated positively, "to be continued" (Caselli 84). Barnes's history thus supports Edward Said's argument in his posthumous writings that late style embodies "a sort of deliberately productive unproductiveness," which Said, following Theodor W. Adorno, associates with novel artwork and "the late phase of a human life" (7, 13).¹⁸ Her "work in progress" becomes works in progress that function like a late-late modernism, one that augments critical readings of her later works as well as scholarship that presses for blurring the modernist—postmodernist break.¹⁹

[III]

Making it newer as she became older, this future-oriented poetic revolution of one expanded beyond traditional meter and rhyme: Barnes's oldest-old "new move" of continuous revision reappears throughout her archived papers. In the draft of her age-themed "Work in progress: Rite of Spring," Barnes turns her aesthetic theory of chronic modification—in essence, an unpublished memorandum to herself—into an innovative work in progress. She adds a period under the quotation mark that encapsulates "New Yorker" to transform the punctuation mark into a colon. She adds

quotation marks around "in progress." She crosses out "merely" and replaces it with "was." She crosses out "thus" and replaces it with a plus sign that signals the word *and*. She adds a dash to her last sentence and a comma after "poem waiting" ("Work"). Anything but frozen in elderly inefficiency, Barnes saw revisionary potential in many of her papers—even in her published works from the 1930s. As she writes in the upper left-hand corner of an undated piece of paper, perhaps recalling Mark Van Doren's dismissive 1937 review of *Nightwood* in the *Nation*: "~~Mark van Doren~~ Nightwood, remember to do something about dog in last chapter [as idiots think its "done"!]" (Note [fig. 5]).

Barnes applied her radical aesthetic theory of works in progress to the other documents that filled her many days—the "whatever" mentioned by McCullough when she marveled at the papers in Patchin Place. These seemingly extraliterary items include her pharmacy lists, several of which are also housed in the University of Maryland's Special Collections. Sometimes these revised lists (many with age-themed contents) are interspersed amid her poem drafts. At other times they are inseparable from them. Between the pages of a draft of "The Hummingbird" later included in *Creatures in an Alphabet*, Barnes jots down a list of medications that she took between 27 and 29 November 1980, on which she crosses out "Nov. 29—'80." Underneath this date, she handwrites "Bow Bells" and "the 7 dials," a reference to the subcultural linguistic tradition of Cockney rhyming slang ("Hummingbird"). In a 1981 pharmacy list included in the middle of numerous revisions for *Creatures*, she revises her order (no "bitter sweet chocolates"; add "one lavender smelling salts") and crosses out "PBZ expectorant" in the midst of medication lists for Inflamase eyedrops, Hycomine cough syrup, and Dyazide tablets for high blood pressure (Prescription routine). On the back of this sheet, she types a poem, "The HIPPO," revises

FIG. 4

Djuna Barnes,
"Work in progress:
Rite of Spring."
Special Collections,
University of Mary-
land Libraries.

~~Mark Van Doren~~ A. R. Throod.
reminds A do something
about dog in last chapter
(as idiots think it's "done" !)

The blister of nails on a baby's finger's hand.
Garcia's Glister of Mice -

Thrush - disease in bag of
Holes ~~that~~ foot

"Keep you mean (Chicks) and 111511 - first born
to say your with absolute refusal
your son-in-law (refusing the Queen)

the title to read “HIPPOPottomus,” and includes another medication regimen. Here she crosses out “disease” and writes “any disease” (Prescription routine).

Barnes treats her grocery lists as revisionary works in progress as well. In a 5 February 1979 order for Jefferson Market, she decides that she wants two large Kleenex boxes rather than three. She does not want “2 rolls Bounty kitchen towels” or “4 Yellow Dole, no sugar, chunk pineapple—small” or “mild cheddar, quarter of a pound?” or “half pound sweet whipped butter, in tub.” She supplements this list with “6 cup cakes” (Grocery). In a shopping list for C. O. Bigelow apparently dated 10 December 1980 and now in O’Neal’s possession, she orders milk of magnesia and adds two revised lines of poetry: “<crenelated roof,holes for shooting through.) / (Kyrie elesison.-Lord have mercy.)” (“C.O.Bigelow.” [fig. 6]). In another list for Jefferson Market, she again includes altered verse: “When first he first fell into his mothers [ladies] lake” (“Jefferson,-675-2277” [fig. 7]). In yet another grocery order, which may be a revision of the same revised list, she strikes “Half pound of smelts,” retypes “Half pounds smelts,” and writes in “(3 smelts.?).” These foodstuff revisions follow lines of verse at the top of the draft: “that stigeon pond,-lake” (“Jefferson Market” [fig. 8]).

These revised documents often befuddle those who encounter them. O’Neal reproduces three of the lists in his memoir and finds them challenging. “It may sound ludicrous but the preparation of a grocery list could easily become a four hour affair; it had to be typed, edited, revised, and finally telephoned to Jefferson Market. It was

written just like a poem” (75). Herring and Stutman likewise describe the lists as “totally unrelated materials” “that have nothing to do with the poem” (Guide xvi). But it may be that Barnes’s everyday doings are not separate from her creative activities and that this overlay of poetry and grocery list is a self-conscious aesthetic practice. As she does to her poems and her commentary to the *New Yorker* and as she wishes to do to the last chapter of *Nightwood*, Barnes turns her grocery

FIG. 5
Djuna Barnes, undated note on *Nightwood*. Special Collections, University of Maryland Libraries.

FIG. 6
Djuna Barnes, “C.O.Bigelow.” Courtesy of Hank O’Neal.

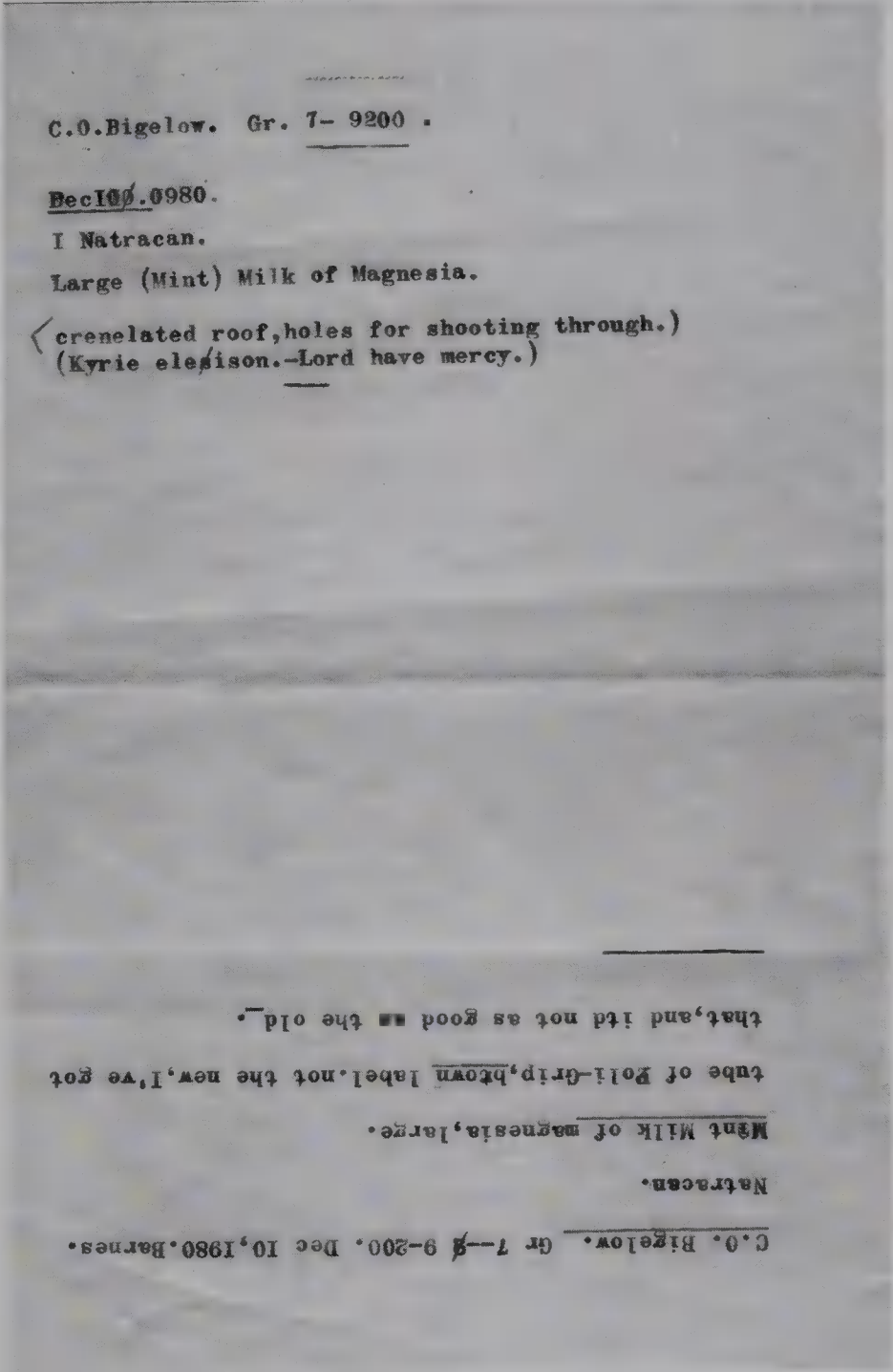


FIG. 7

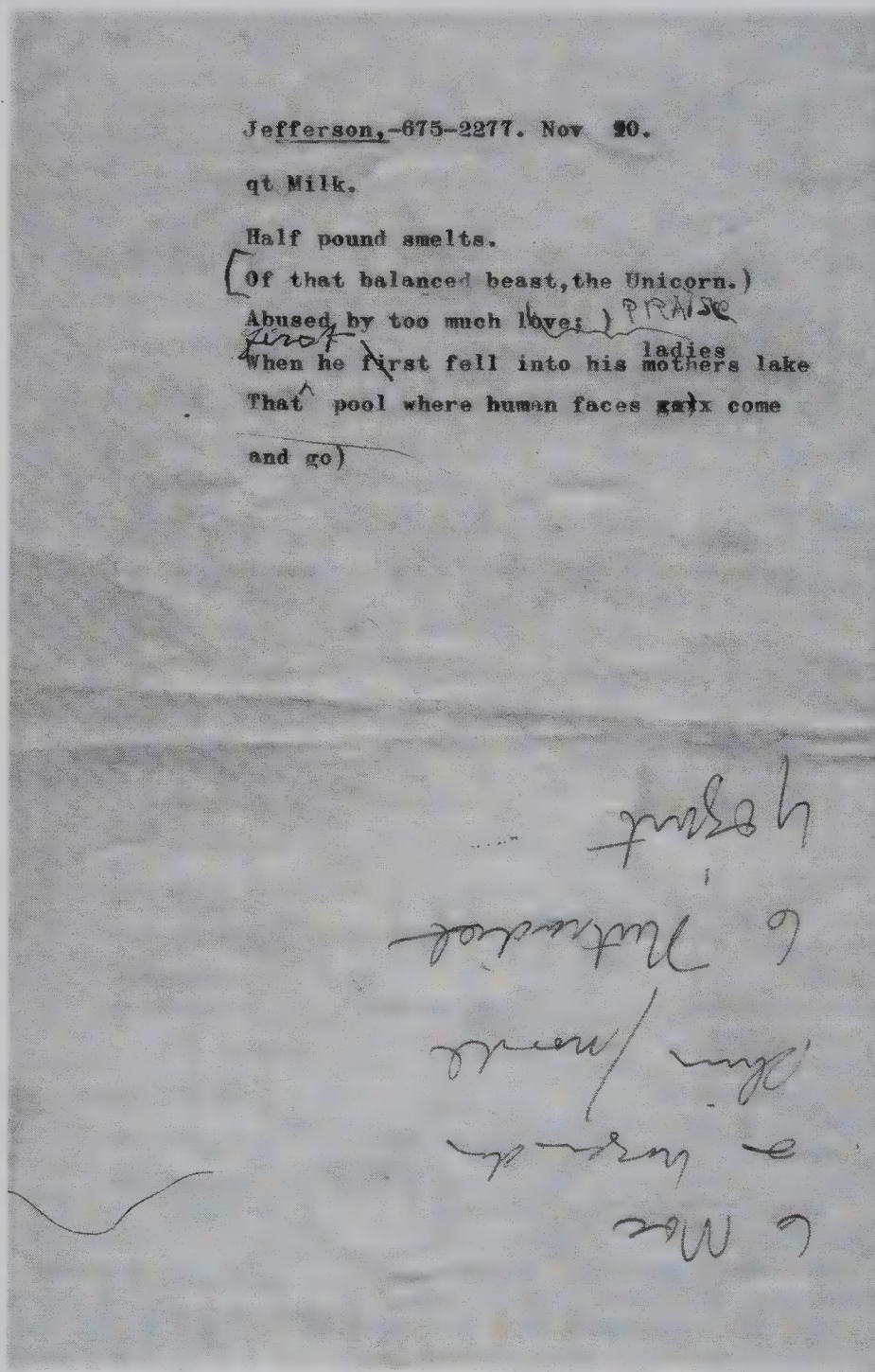
Djuna Barnes,
"Jefferson,-675-2277."
Courtesy of Hank
O'Neal.

and pharmacy lists into aesthetic works in progress. The similitude—a grocery list “just like” a piece of poetry—seems deliberate as she transforms her quotidian notes into an unendingly revised poem cycle. Along the way, Barnes reimagines the genre of the shopping list in the last quarter of the twentieth century as an experimental piece of poesy, one full of new things (“Sun-sweet prune juice,” a beverage first bottled in 1932 with the aid of

Duffy-Mott Company) and old (“Kyrie elesion,” a Greek chant dating back to antiquity and absorbed into the Roman Catholic mass).

I consequently do not read these lists as slipshod additions to the university’s Special Collections but as an integral part of Barnes’s “totally new” late-life corpus. Though absent from her *Collected Poems*, these verse drafts should not be untangled from the grocery-list drafts or her other marginalia. Barnes turns

her cupcake orders into a particular form of avant-garde poetry, and vice versa. “Some of the severely edited pages,” writes O’Neal, “took on a visual life of their own, apart from any literary content” (87). Other typescripts bear out this insight. Some, such as “Dereliction,” include nearly indiscernible flower-like doodles. Others feature ink drawings of a red poppy with a green stem alongside the titles of the poems. Still others feature six-pointed red stars hand-drawn or pressed from a rubber stamp. When one also considers Barnes’s markup of her writing in variously colored inks, these pages start to look less like incoherent scribbling and more like modernist experimentations that overlay images and words—quasi-surrealist artworks that gesture to her time spent among fellow avant-gardists such as Man Ray as well as a continuation of her own lifelong interest in drawing, painting, and poetics. Under the rubric of life writing theory, I refer to these drawings as what the art critic Jennifer A. González, working in a vein of material culture studies, terms *autotopography*, “a spatial representation of important relations, emotional ties, and past events,” which Barnes intermingles with her present life in Greenwich Village (134).



As much as she erased distinctions between a finished and an unfinished work, or a grocery list and a free-verse poem, so too did she extinguish differences between the page and her quotidian late life. Barnes, in other words, transformed her mundane activities at Patchin Place (buying groceries, taking vitamins, ordering medicine) into an aesthetic work in progress under persistent revision.²⁰ Hence, when Levine's review movingly states that the university's collections are "the record of incredible gallantry and dedication to a goal that receded as Barnes's growing infirmity made the completion of her last work impossible" (197), I offer a friendly amendment. This impossibility as she aged was, rather, a substantial achievement that widened beyond yet enveloped her literary endeavors. Barnes turned her late life into an unfinished poem and her unfinished poems into her late life. As one scholar remarks, "[T]he composition of the poem—and, by extension, Barnes's literary project as a whole—itself becomes the poem's ultimate subject" (Heisler 709). While the same critic also finds that "nothing she produced after *Nightwood* . . . was successful" and that "Rite of Spring" is "weary and inconclusive" (709, 701), her drafts showcase an alternative sense of aesthetic realization outside publication. By approaching daily life in Patchin Place as its muse, her self-composition was another totally new idea in the wake of late modern decline ideology.

[IV]

To push the logic of this last claim one step further: as Barnes blurred the border between writing and

grocery shopping, she turned her senior self into an unacknowledged avant-garde performance. She put not only everyday writing under correction but also her person, and this self-revision further counters the characterizations of her geriatric entropy overviewed in my introduction. I earlier noted in my discussion of her "Dereliction" drafts that Barnes edited her name as she revised the poem, and I reflect on what this means as part of her larger project. As she hyperbolizes in a letter, "I

FIG. 8

Djuna Barnes,
"Jefferson
Market, Barnes."
Courtesy of
Hank O'Neal.

that stigeon pond, -lake. 675
Jefferson Market, Barnes. Phone 657-2277
Qt. Milk.
~~Half pound Port Salut.~~
Half pound Port Salut.
6 oranges.
2 large kleenex.
one Kellogg's No 19, wheat flakes?
✓ large BRILLO — I—
Marmalade/Dundee..English.
Garlic (Glove)
Garlic 1/2 head of.
~~Kellogg's wheat flakes No 19.~~
Kellogg's wheat flakes No 19.
Head of Garlic. (Glove)
Pure maple syrup. (Glove)
2 Yogurt. plain.
✓ quarter pound Port-Salut cheese.
One Buitoni grated cheese...parmison 3 ounces
liquid soap ? (Bald-headed man) Mr. Clean? Pint?
3 Haagen-Dazs Coffee ice cream (pints)
2 Cranapple (quarts)
2 Sun-sweet prune juice 2 quarts
3 Malted milk, natural 3 carnations
Half pound smelts. (3 Smelts?)
1 Stella Doro bread sticks.
3 macintosh apples

never move from Patchin Place, where I hold my infirmities in one hand, and write poetry with the other” (qtd. in Caselli 83). Though she imagines them in separate hands, her “infirmities”—her aging self—and her poetic revolution of one at Patchin Place function in tandem. They go hand in hand in a self-conceptualization where everything becomes work in progress: artwork, daily rhythms, and subjectivity in a studio apartment.

This claim explains an ostensibly unremarkable detail found throughout the University of Maryland’s Special Collections: Barnes’s name at the top of most of her typescripts. The name sometimes shares the same line as the poem title. One poem, for example, could be titled “Pavan” or “Djuna Barnes” (fig. 9). If you had to pick a working title for the numerous pages housed in College Park, you could do worse than “Djuna Barnes.” There is, Barnes noted, little distinction between the productive infirmities of her self-identity and the productive revisions of her Patchin Place “self life writing” (Smith and Watson 4).

Personal cultivation of this cherished apartment space is a recurrent theme and a rejoinder to age ideology. “Pavan” is exemplary of this dynamic as the poem rehearses the trope of conscious aging:

Pavan

There should be forests for old men
To twitter in, to spaddle in, to pray,
Boscage too, for Madames sot and spay,
(That’s for memory”) puff-balls of a day,
With suet and herbs to make them spry
Virginals laid by
Whipless tops to ply
Loud hay to rustle in,
Birds that walk away—
And then,
Mulberry to re-consider in,

FIG. 9

Djuna Barnes,
“Pavan,” Special Collections,
University of Maryland Libraries.

One may agree with Herring and Stutman’s reading of “Pavan” that “a draft never quite emerged from presurrealistic confusion” (Intro. 12). But if we approach the typescript as

avant-gardist age autobiography, the thematic of pleasurable aging—one imbricating the old with the new—comes into clearer focus. “Pavan” is rife with old-new juxtapositions similar to her poetic grocery lists, which combine mass-produced Häagen-Dazs ice cream alongside citations of ancient Greek. Barnes’s lifelong attraction to the etymology of older languages likewise reveals itself in the poem’s references to *boscage* and *sot*. The former term is from an early modern English word for pastoral landscape; the latter can refer to a drunkard and has been in circulation since the late sixteenth century. To these little-used words, she adds *puff-balls*, a centuries-old expression for “gasteromycete fungi” that also refers to women’s skirts, starting in the mid-twentieth century (“Puffball”).

At the same time, the poem makes it new with linguistic experimentations interspersed amid these older idioms. *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that *spaddle* is an archaic noun used until the first third of the nineteenth century to refer to “a small spade” (“Spaddle”). Barnes transforms this gardening implement into a verb: “to spaddle in.” Similarly, “whipless tops” makes literal sense if the poem refers to dress shirts worn by disempowered politicians of Parliament (“Whipless”), but I believe that Barnes may have had a different intent. “Presurrealistic” phrases such as “to spaddle in” and “whipless tops” showcase the artist crafting new expressions through outmoded words found in her “much-used two-volume Oxford English Dictionary” (Page 110).

As it does so, “Pavan” schematizes and materializes creative agency in an era of decline ideology by approaching aging not as a cultural zone of destitution but as a site of potent and fecund vivacity. From its opening line, the piece conjures an idyll in which “old men” can muck around. Conflating humanity with songbirds, the poem asks for liberty for them to “twitter” or to tweet within. Two lines later, it does the same for women,

X
Pavan

Twilight

Djuna Barnes

to Twilight in —

There should be forests for old men

To twitter in, to spaddle in, to pray,

Boscage too, for Madames, sot and spay, (for memory)

(That's for memory") puff-balls of a day, (sot &)

With auct and herbs to make them spry

Virginals laid by

whipless tops to ply & laid on

Lead hay to rustle in,

Birds that walk away—

And then,

Mulberry to re-consider in..

unwhipped's

"Madames" who find sustenance such as "suet and herbs" in this phantasmic bucolic. In the light of my claim that this draft is indistinguishable from Barnes in Patchin Place, can we assume that her hoarder homestead provided literal and figurative room for these revelries? It is not too much of a stretch to read personal autobiography in this poem's arcadia given that Manhattan's denizens "re-consider" the borough's many mulberry trees every spring, that Mulberry Street is a half-hour walk from Patchin Place, and that Barnes spaddled for decades in her abode. "Pavan" marks the pleasures of refreshing old lexicon day in, day out, as it archives Barnes's urban arcadia. While this unpublished poem does not reflect "the joke of old age" or "the indignity of aging" as do some of her other drafts, it unquestionably constitutes "a bold denunciation of the failing of her power" in Greenwich Village (Levine 188, 194, 199).

Moments captured in other documents do the same. A corresponding example of this experimentalist aging appears in one of the sundry drafts of "Virgin Spring," where Barnes includes the following couplet, which she elsewhere repeats: "The slow beat of old ladies wings- / There should be gardens for such things." Akin to "Pavan," "Virgin Spring" pines for a sylvan space that fosters creative freedom. Like other archived poems, its couplet enacts this performative arena through the process of its compositions. In step with the aesthetic patterns of incompleteness and innovation that I outlined, on this draft Barnes crosses out "gardens" and handwrites "valleys," "isles," "chasms," "glades," "funnels," "tunnels," "gales," and, most interesting, considering the apartment building in which she worked, "corridors." A "slow beat" begun in 1940, Barnes's Patchin Place avant-gardism offered shelter for her revisionary "wings," and the poem suggests that more cultivated "gardens" be readied for other women artists.

As much a revolutionary manifesto as her *New Yorker* note to self, these two lines and

their unfinished alterations insist on spaces for revision unencumbered by (male) editorial demands. As she did her unpublished response to Moss's rejection, her pharmacy lists, and her grocery orders, Barnes commits herself and her residence—her "gardens"—to what Caselli terms a "merciless economy of revision, which leaves nothing untouched" (25). I emphasize the pleasures of this nothing, which is to say her everything. Return to the poem in progress "Derelection" (fig. 2), where she types "Djuna" and then an "x," which she crosses out. In another draft, titled "(Item vrom Poems in Passing.): Phantom Spring," Barnes types over her first and last names and then re-types them with her local, state, and national address. And in "The Marian Year" she revises her address as much as herself when she strikes out "N.Y.C." to replace it with "N.Y."

As these works, "Pavan," her medicine regimen, and the couplet from "Virgin Spring" attest, Barnes's later typescripts further necessitate repeatedly innovating her elder self rather than ceasing to revise it. While previous criticism suggests that the five poems published before her death offer "a detached observation of the painful effects of age" (Kannenstine 168), familiarity with the unpublished materials complicates this reception. Hence, while I agree with Shari Benstock that Barnes's way of late life "should not be seen (as it usually is) either as an inability to live in the world or as an elaborate eccentricity" (267), I do not see this period of time as "a self-imposed censorship of sexuality and speech," whereby Barnes "finally refused to acknowledge her body" (267). Barnes acknowledged and, at times, feted the "wings" of women artists like her. In "Work in progress: Rite of Spring," with its desire for an aesthetic theory "to be continued," she envisions her mortal "shroud" not as an instrument that one "cannot purge" but as something to "re-consider in," a work in progress that pushes her avant-garde aesthetics beyond the line of a finalized poem or a checked-off item on a

grocery list and into the enduring drafts of selfhood across four decades. In the boscage of 5 Patchin Place, aging as innovation rather than “aging-as-decline” was her abiding artistic preoccupation (Gullette, *Aged* 39).

[V]

“For years afterward,” E. E. Cummings’s biographer Christopher Sawyer-Lauçanno tells readers in a much repeated line, “Cummings would from time to time raise his window and shout across the courtyard, ‘Are you still alive, Djuna?’” (512). This apocryphal anecdote exemplifies the gerontophobia that I seek to dull. Barnes would have been too busy to reply to her good neighbor. Another anecdote should be recalled instead. In a 23 May 1973 letter to her friend Rudolph “Silas” Glossop, a British engineer, she writes, “I’ve had great wear and smash since 1969. . . . Miss Barnes is in a hurry and can’t stop for the amenities.” Conceptualizing her aging as a rush job that took decades, Barnes does not see herself as insulated in Patchin Place even though she once described herself as “a form of Trappist” (qtd. in Raymont). Though Trappist monks rarely engage with the public, their days brim with activities, and Barnes presents herself as feverishly racing against the clock. A letter sent six years earlier to Glossop confirms this regime: “I get up at five, have my breakfast, and shortly am at the typewriter, at which, except for the off-and-on necessary stop for lying down (the back does not now take very long to crack up), then back again at my books, papers and verse.” Turning her writer self into a late-life work liberated from editorial regulation, she diligently composed this personal medium through daily imaginative revision.

I could cite Michel Foucault and refer to her efforts as a gerontological *ascesis*—the art of existing irrespective of societal misconceptions surrounding one’s chronological age (9). I could again mention the gerontologist Robert N. Butler, who ends his classic 1975 *Why*

Survive? Being Old in America with a line that Barnes would have appreciated: “But we still have the possibility of making life a work of art” (422). Barnes made good on Foucault’s and Butler’s observations when she treated herself as a novel project that postponed completion in the cultural wake of modern decline ideology. In contrast to those who render her withering on the vine of a tight Greenwich Village street, I have argued that she religiously tended to an experimentalist object world—an avant-garde urban monastery—of poems, writing instruments, lavender salts, papers, gourmet ice cream, medications, mulberry trees, personhood, and dwelling.

These last remarks recall the Sedgwickian senile sublime. Though her papers look an unmanageable mess to some, this may be the point, given that her late-life project does not fit neatly into aesthetic norms of completed works or editor-approved productions. These “old brilliant” enactments of ongoing self-experimentation should be acknowledged rather than derided (Sedgwick 24). That said, I do not want this essay’s recasting to forget Barnes’s occasional gripes about aging or paper over her conservative urbanoia. New York City, she finds in a letter dated November 1967, is “dirty, dangerous, and in my section, all that and ridiculous—hippies—hoppies and ‘flower’ children” (Letter to Silas Glossop).

Nevertheless, it is important to remember that Barnes did not stop writing, revising, or challenging her mediums between the Second World War and the Ronald Reagan presidency. Instead of slowing down, she continued apace. Instead of withdrawing into silence, she refused to quiet herself. Instead of chaotic inefficiency, she sustained and realized a “totally new” model of exceptional production. Her life did not become circumscribed through self-isolation but flourished as her much, much later modernism—however anachronistic if one adheres to orthodox periodization—reinterpreted a stigmatized social category of geriatric debility. That

scholarship has often overlooked the complexities of this performance points to a need for more age theory as studies of aesthetics and of the modernist-contemporary binary continue to evolve. This essay hints at the interpretive richness that emerges when insights from life writing theory buoy such analyses.

As she inaugurated an unprecedented fusion of literary effort and self-revision that eliminated distinctions between “infirmities” and composition, Barnes’s unfinished drafts point to the “cutting-edge difference” that these critical modes make for “general readers, writers, artists, and journalists, feminists, the media, cultural studies, [and] the socially informed humanities” (Gullette, *Aged* 106). Over many hours, the artist reformed the genre of the modern decline narrative—much as she previously did the realist novel, the sensational newspaper report, Freudian dream-work, and sexological inversion narratives. She molded her longevity into a geriatric avant-garde by rendering the former indistinguishable from the latter. Our scholarship should mark the innovative aim of this personal performance beyond the enduring pathologization of her biography. At the least, we can conceive of the roughly 15,265 days of her existence in Patchin Place—I include the leap years—as something other than an elderly modern’s wasted life.

NOTES

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1. For definitional discussions of *oldest old* as part of a novel discourse of the later twentieth century, see Suzman, Willis, and Manton. These authors note the historical importance of the “May 1984 annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. For the title of that session, they [Matilda White Riley and Richard Suzman] coined the term ‘oldest old,’ a refinement of Bernice Neugarten’s earlier ‘old old,’ . . . to denote those aged 85 years or older” (3).

2. A few other scholarly considerations join the limited criticism on Barnes’s post-1940s published poetry later discussed: Kannenstine 161–69; Kalaidjian 161 on his mention of “Quarry”; and Tyler-Bennett.

3. Phrasing Barnes’s aging in such manner, I follow Woodward in *Aging* and in *At Last*, which advocates for “an aging Modernism” and cautions that “the literature of gerontology is characterized by bipolarity: unfortunately it tends to be either flatly optimistic or pessimistic” (x, xi).

4. Herring, e.g., draws on O’Neal’s memoir for his final chapter in *Djuna* (295–310).

5. Others who have tracked the ethics of biography include Alpern et al.; Glendinning; Peters; and Podnieks, who notes the genre’s potential “invasion of privacy” (6).

6. For complementary accounts of their interactions, see Gerstenberger; Plumb, “Revising.”

7. Further assessments of this relationship include Faltejskova; Hollis; and Curry, who finds Eliot making “severe demands on Barnes, asking her to accept his editing and to make further cuts of her own” (286).

8. For more on the critical resistance of autobiography (especially for women authors), see Brodzki and Schenck; Fuchs on autobiography “as a means of resistance or protest” (*Text* 4); Friedman; Gilmore; and Smith.

9. A helpful representational critique of aging “angry women” can be found in Woodward, *Statistical Panic* 75. Gender, modern anglophone literature, and aging discourses are also addressed in Borenstein and in Woodward, *Figuring*. For an example of Barnes’s own critiques of aging, see Messerli, who writes that “the Barnes that I met in November 1973 could only bemoan that ‘it’s terrible to outlive your own generation. I wish I could be dead.’ For as early as 1930—when she admitted to Donald Ogden Stewart that she wouldn’t really mind dying—she must have already felt something close to that” (8).

10. Another notable exception is Burke, who describes an elderly Barnes “engaged in private spiritual quests that few could understand” (78).

11. See DuPlessis, *Blue Studios*, for a useful discussion of the modern long poem and its various undertakings that spans from William Carlos Williams’s *Paterson* and H.D.’s *Trilogy* to her own *Drafts*.

12. Nor is this to forget, as suggested earlier, the existence of an “Approved Poems” folder in the collections, which Levine tells us was “apparently assembled with Hank O’Neal’s help in 1979” (193).

13. Scholarly debates over the history and periodization of the phrase *avant-garde* are integral to the term, even though later Barnes did not join in these conversations at any length. For but one colloquy, see Eburne and Felski.

14. Bush offers a thorough textual history of Pound's drafts. For an extended discussion of Zukofsky and Olson, see DuPlessis, *Purple Passages*. Bornstein complements Schulze with further details on Moore's multiple revisions.

15. Levine's comprehensive discussion of Barnes's poetry before its categorization at the university addresses links between Barnes's later poetry and Joyce. She writes—and I concur—that “the title [‘Work in Progress’] suggests a rhetorical marriage between Ingmar Bergman and James Joyce, sections of whose *Finnegans Wake* were called ‘Work in Progress’ when they first appeared in *transition*” (194). In a not unrelated vein, O’Neal also links this project to Joyce’s revisions of *Ulysses* (86). Predecessors who revised their literature over a lifetime, such as Walt Whitman, were, of course, possible models, and potential creative parallels exist between Barnes and her contemporaries in the 1970s and 1980s. Her most immediate influence appears to be later Joyce, and so I approach her works in progress within this aesthetic parameter.

16. See North, who first alerted me to this quotation's existence, for a literary history of the phrase *make it new* in relation to anglophone modernism (162–71).

17. Hardie supports Sullivan's claims in a close reading of Barnes's *The Book of Repulsive Women* (1915) that concentrates on the author's “labor of revision” (119).

18. Said expands Adorno's claim that “late works are relegated to the outer reaches of art,” a critical commonplace to which Adorno has “serious objection” (564). While I do not unavoidably see later productions as clean breaks with earlier stylistics, it is fun to read Adorno as an age theorist. For a smart interpretation of late (British) modernism that incorporates Said's findings, see Micir.

19. With her “unsettling of literary and historical oppositions like modernism and postmodernism,” Barnes is central to Miller's influential theorizations of late modernism (124). Miller dates it as post-1925 while granting “the problem of defining its chronological boundaries” (10, 21). More recently, Nealon calls for “a literary history that would be better told outside the influential language of ‘modernity’ that insists on imagining a sharp break . . . between the moderns and the postmoderns” (210). Ehlers offers a similar cross-periodization claim to explore “the anxious space between the Victorian and the modern, the ‘old’ and the ‘new’” (38).

20. Framing Barnes in this manner, I align with Woodward, who characterizes modernist poetics in general when she describes Pound's cantos as “an unfolding of his life (Pound was among the first to invent this form)” (*At Last* 72), and Micir, who suggests that the “late activities” of modernist authors “should be read as modes of life writing” (122).

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Jewish Literature / World Literature: Between the Local and the Transnational

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IN THE PAST TWO DECADES, SCHOLARS OF WORLD LITERATURE AND transnational literary studies have called for an overhaul of the national literature model, which they have characterized as outdated and of diminishing relevance in a global age, in favor of a model based on literature's movement beyond national boundaries. Critics of world literature have questioned its premises, emphasizing the affinities between its foundations and the scholarly practices associated with European colonialism. They interrogate world literature in relation to Eurocentrism, orientalism, hierarchies of comparison, questions of race and of scale, and the politics of the untranslatable.¹ These approaches disclose the power relations implicit in translingual or cross-cultural comparison and revisit the politics underscoring the earliest articulations of a world literature.²

Yet across the spectrum of approaches, scholarship on world literature has focused on the languages of the metropolitan center. While numerous scholars have noted the importance of opening up comparative literary scholarship (particularly in North America) to the "lesser-studied" languages (often invoking the 1993 "Bernheimer Report" [Bernheimer et al.]), few of them have heeded their own call.³ Gayatri Spivak's 2003 *Death of a Discipline* made a now famous plea for a new, "planetary" comparative literature that would bring the rigor and linguistic expertise of area studies to humanistic literary studies.⁴ Over a decade later, despite the prevalence of the terms *global*, *planetary*, and *world* in comparative literary studies, both comparative literature and world literature remain predominantly confined to the metropolitan languages and their global spread. Much of the newer scholarship investigates circuits of literary exchange between the metropolitan center and the colonial periphery,⁵ typically limited to works in the language of the colonial

power. But as Aamir Mufti, Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, and others have convincingly argued, “global English,” for example, will not tell us the story of world literature (Mufti, “Orientalism” 488–93; Lionnet and Shih 11). We too contend that to understand the imperial or metropolitan languages in a global context, one must also look at the (often multilingual) literature that moves among peripheral circuits.⁶

In this essay, we are interested in the dynamics of a literary configuration that might not encompass “the world”—but whose transnational networks of linguistic and cultural exchange provide a clear counterpoint to the center-periphery model of global literary circulation. Toward these ends, we examine a previously overlooked example: the circuit of modern Jewish-language literatures, composed of multiple centers in Asia, Africa, Europe, and North America.⁷ In tracing the circulation of texts in Jewish literary networks, we discover a model of world literature tied to practices of translation between “minor” (nonmetropolitan) languages. As we will demonstrate, Jewish literature provides a compelling case for the centrality of minor languages to discussions of transnational literary culture.

Jewish Literature and Modernity

Although scholars often construe modern Jewish writing as the cosmopolitan literary culture par excellence, Jewish literatures have not received serious attention in the study of world literature. They have figured in these discussions but peripherally, through writers who embraced the major European languages, and particularly through the misread figure of Kafka. For example, in their book on Kafka and minor literature, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari misconstrue Kafka’s knowledge of Yiddish and Hebrew.⁸ Moreover, Kafka’s idiosyncratic relationship to Jewish languages and culture hardly represents the dominant

issues haunting the vast network of Jewish literatures—a network that spans the cosmopolitan centers, the colonial peripheries, and the complex relations of power inscribed in and between these locations. Here, we present the case of Jewish literature as a microcosm of world literature in its local and global iterations. By Jewish literature, we mean the secularizing belletristic Jewish cultures that emerged as early as the eighteenth century and reached their apex in the mid-twentieth century.⁹ We argue that this literature is a staging ground for the theoretical questions underscoring world literature’s critical practices. Multilingual, transnational, and characterized by mobility, the Jewish literatures of this period exemplify many of the core ideas informing the discourse on world literature; but they present a model of cultural circulation with no clear center. Moving fluidly between local and transnational contexts, they negotiate literary influences from non-Jewish contexts while circulating texts among Jewish languages. Further, considering the critical importance of ideas of enlightenment and modernity to this diffuse body of writing allows us to reconceptualize the relation of post-Enlightenment thought to world literature, particularly in nonmetropolitan languages (Mufti, “Orientalism”). The decentered model offered by Jewish literature may also be relevant to the study of other transnational diasporic cultures.

Modern Jewish literature emerged through practices of translation and cultural transfer. If the study of world literature can be enhanced through consideration of Jewish literature, the reverse is also true—Jewish literature can be better understood using the tools of world literature. World literature has been identified with a number of methodological approaches ranging from Goethe’s concept of *Weltliteratur* to Franco Moretti’s call for “distant reading.”¹⁰ We build on the “circulation” approach elaborated in David Damrosch’s 2003 book *What Is World*

Literature?, which embraces world literature as a “mode of reading” (5) and illuminates the translingual and cross-cultural circuitry of texts, as well as their reception in new contexts (24–25). This approach is particularly germane to the study of minor literatures in broader world-literary contexts.

Our analysis of Jewish literature as world literature deals with belletristic works written by Jews from the 1840s to the 1940s, a period that comprises the Haskalah, a Jewish response to the Enlightenment, and its immediate aftermath, known to Hebrew literary historians as the *Tehiya* (revival).¹¹ The development of secular Jewish literature was linked directly to the Haskalah, a loosely defined panoply of intellectual activities and ideologies responding to the Enlightenment. From the circle of Moses Mendelssohn in Germany, it evolved into a network of cultural circles in eastern Europe, where its focus shifted from acculturation to European society and modernization of Jewish life to a revival of Hebrew language and literature (Goldberg 23–24). Although standard historiographies end the Haskalah in the early 1880s and locate it exclusively in Europe, Haskalah activity spread throughout the Jewish world and continued through the first decades of the twentieth century (Levy, “Reorienting”). The maskilim (proponents of the Haskalah) produced a multilingual body of literature in Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic, Ladino (Judeo-Spanish), and Yiddish, as well as national and regional languages.¹² From the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century, literary texts of Jewish and non-Jewish origins circulated broadly and freely throughout the Jewish world, undergoing translation into multiple Jewish languages.

As a post-Enlightenment phenomenon, the development of modern Jewish literature mirrored the larger formation of world literature. The varied processes of Jewish enlightenment across the globe reflect the power dynamics disseminated by European imperi-

alism. As Mufti argues, the notion of world literature in the Goethean sense emerged alongside the “philological knowledge revolution” associated with the rise of nineteenth-century orientalism: the infusion of orientalist languages and cultures into European literature helped produce the so-called world literary space, which was in fact a European literary space (“Orientalism” 459). The creation of Jewish literature in the sense of an autonomous, secular literature (as distinct from traditional textual practices) was arguably a product of these same processes. The Haskalah is associated in part with the activities of the nineteenth-century *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (science of Judaism). A movement of German Jewish intellectuals and an offshoot of German orientalism, the *Wissenschaft* forged a secular and scientific approach to the study of Jewish texts in the belief that it would raise the status of Jewish culture and establish a sense of Jewish peoplehood, on a par with that of other European peoples. The *Wissenschaft* was influenced by the legacy of cultural synthesis and interfaith accommodation in Islamic Spain (in Hebrew, *Sepharad*; in Arabic, *al-Andalus*), where acculturated Jews produced masterpieces of Hebrew literature influenced by Arabic literary models. German Jews adopted this legacy as a cultural ideal they could emulate to gain acceptance into German society.¹³ Furthermore, the colonial dynamics of “enlightenment” were present in the Haskalah itself, as Jews from the Islamic world entered the discourse defending their own modernity to their European brethren, who often responded with condescension (Levy, “Jewish Writers” 321–76). We raise the matter of internal Jewish orientalism to note that the methodologies of world literature are relevant not only to recovering the historical processes of translation and circulation of Jewish texts but also to a deeper historical critique of the foundations of secular Jewish literary practice, as has already been initiated in other cultural contexts.¹⁴

Despite Jewish literature's inherent multilingualism and transnationalism, until recently the scholarship has focused on single languages or regions. In the last decade Jewish literary scholarship has taken something of a transnational and comparative turn, but thus far the new scholarship has been largely compartmentalized.¹⁵ Its most dominant trend is the much-needed revisionist historiography of Hebrew and Yiddish, which rethinks their symbiotic development, their relation to other languages, and the distortion of their literary history by Zionism.¹⁶ A second, related trend entails studying European Jewish literatures comparatively through their contact with non-Jewish languages such as German or Russian.¹⁷ A third involves engaging the Jewish literature of less commonly studied regions, particularly Latin America,¹⁸ and a fourth is the study of Jewish literatures of the Levant and of Ladino-based Sephardi literature, encompassing Hebrew, standard Arabic, French, and Ladino (Judeo-Arabic still awaits integration into comparative literary study; the present article represents a first step in that direction).¹⁹ Finally, a few recent titles suggest a move toward studying Jewish literatures in relation to literatures with which they have had little or no direct contact.²⁰ Absent from Jewish literary scholarship as a whole is a methodological intervention that might enable these various scholarly developments to speak to each other.

This type of intervention was partially anticipated by Dan Miron, who, in *From Continuity to Contiguity: Toward a New Jewish Literary Thinking* (2010) conceptualizes a vast network of Jewish writing, "the Jewish literary complex," that cannot be understood as a single unified or national literature. To comprehend this network, Miron contends, we must replace the concept of historical continuity that has defined thinking on Jewish literature with that of "contiguity." Although Miron gestures at broader comparative possibilities, he restricts his examples of contiguity to two

canonical European Jewish writers, Kafka and Sholem Aleichem, overlooking non-European, as well as noncanonical European, Jewish authors. While we accept the premises of contiguity as an alternative to ontological definitions and national accounts of literature, here we focus on how Jewish-language writing circulates and produces new social meanings in transnational and multilingual contexts.

This article offers one of the first comparative studies of Jewish-language literatures across geographic regions and cultural contexts, particularly among Jewish communities of Europe, Asia, and Africa. We follow the movement of "peripheral" literature in multiple Jewish languages rather than translation into major languages or reception in metropolitan centers. Our ensuing discussion of Jewish literature is organized along what we view as the four main axes of the scholarship on world literature: multilingualism, translation, the circulation of literary works, and literary address—that is, the manifold ways a text invokes a particular audience, whether through direct address, by dint of language choice, or through subtler narrative techniques. This will be followed by an analysis of two case studies illustrating our methodology of reading Jewish writing as world literature.

Language, Translation, Circulation, Address

Language

With the partial exception of Hebrew literature in Israel, Jewish literature has always been produced in what Itamar Even-Zohar termed the Jewish linguistic polysystem—the stratified configuration of languages that characterized diasporic Jewish life. Typically, Hebrew served as the higher-status language, that of the intellectual elite; another Jewish language (e.g., Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic) served as the "low-status" vernacular (often perceived as a jargon); and a local, non-Jewish language (e.g., German, Russian, Arabic) served as a third element, of variable status.

Before Israeli Hebrew, Jewish languages were not associated with nation-states; nor were they globalized languages linked to the exercise of sovereign power in an international arena. They were at once local and transnational, crossing national borders while remaining confined almost exclusively to Jewish communities. That said, it would be disingenuous to suggest that because Jewish languages are nonnational, Jewish literature is written entirely outside the national perspective. Modern Jewish writers working in either Jewish or standard national languages often allied themselves with Zionism or other, non-Jewish, nationalisms. Furthermore, language choice itself was often an implicit form of ideological affiliation. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Jewish writers embraced standard languages as tools of national or cultural expression. Consider the case of Moroccan Jewry in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Moroccan Jewish cultural modernity was shaped by three competing forces: Hebrew (linked to the Haskalah, as well as to the early Zionist movement), French language and literature (linked to emancipation and to “universal” culture), and Judeo-Arabic, which was undergoing a major expansion of literary activity. Later, some twentieth-century Maghrebi Jewish writers affiliated themselves with the independence and anticolonial movements.²¹ Each of these forces was associated with a different linguistic and cultural politics that informed Jewish writing in Morocco and, postmigration, in Israel and France.

Translation

Translation has been endemic to Jewish culture since antiquity. What was new about Jewish translation from the mid-nineteenth century on were factors of speed and scale. In North Africa, India, and the Levant, as elsewhere, new technologies of printing and communication like letterpresses and the

telegraph allowed for the rapid transmission of printed material. This led to the popularization of journalism, creating new reading publics while facilitating communication between different segments of the Jewish world. Throughout this world, periodicals played the most important role in creating and modernizing readerships; the “single most prolific genre of Yiddish and Ladino print culture was the popular press” (Stein 4). Periodicals were first published in Ladino in 1842, in Judeo-Arabic and Hebrew in 1856, and in Yiddish in 1862. By 1913 there were nearly four hundred Jewish periodicals in the Ladino-speaking regions (Turkey and the Balkans), “while the number of Yiddish periodicals in Eastern Europe exceeded the thousands” (Stein 4). As a result, diverse Jewish communities that had enjoyed limited contact could now develop a sense of solidarity or, alternatively, of competition. These advances in technologies of communications and printing enabled geographically diffuse Jewish communities to follow each other’s modernizing practices and to foster a sense of a unified Jewish world.

Literary translation from European languages was a primary mechanism of self-modernization. Writers throughout the Jewish world sought to develop modern Jewish-language literatures by translating contemporary European literature.²² Jewish writers in eastern Europe embarked on broad translation projects to bring the classics of European literature to the Jewish masses. As they embraced the European novel, they also looked to endogenous literary precursors, including medieval travel narratives, chronicles, and folk legends from the Bible (which were popular in modern Judeo-Arabic literature). Furthermore, with the transmission of material among the Jewish communities of the Ottoman Empire, the nineteenth century saw extensive translation between Judeo-Spanish and Judeo-Arabic. Thus, translation served as an intermediary between the broader world and the Jewish

world, not by bringing Jewish texts to a global audience but by bringing the literary world into a burgeoning Jewish literary modernity.

Circulation

In addition to translation, economic and political circumstances also played key roles in the production and circulation of Jewish literature, informing decisions about where to live, write, and publish. For example, in the 1920s European Jewish writers were drawn to Weimar Germany and particularly to Berlin, which for economic and cultural reasons became an important center for Hebrew and Yiddish publishing.²³ The explosion of avant-garde culture in Berlin attracted modernist Jewish writers; moreover, the inflation of the German mark rendered supplies inexpensive, and Yiddish writers, particularly those paid in American dollars, earned a good living. However, the 1924 devaluation of the mark sent writers back to the Soviet Union, to North America, and to Mandatory Palestine. These social and economic factors drove the circulation of Jewish writers and readers along diasporic cultural circuits.

For Middle Eastern Jewry, the Italian port city of Livorno (Leghorn) was long an economic hub of trade among Italy, North Africa, and the Ottoman Levant. It became the dominant center of Middle Eastern Hebrew printing in the eighteenth century, providing books for Jewish readers throughout the Ottoman Empire and Europe. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, however, as the Ottoman Empire began to modernize, Jewish entrepreneurs set up Hebrew printing houses in Constantinople and, in smaller numbers, throughout the Arabic-speaking provinces in North Africa and the Levant, challenging Livorno's dominance. Nourished by the spread of printing technology and by the growing desire for knowledge and information, Judeo-Arabic underwent a century-long renaissance that reached as far east as India.

From the early nineteenth century, enterprising Baghdadi Jewish mercantile families set up trade networks throughout the British Empire in Asia. In 1841 Hebrew presses were established concurrently in Calcutta and Bombay; they printed Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic books and, from 1856, published newspapers in Judeo-Arabic (Avishur, *Hehakham* 20). The emergence of these newspapers and their relation to Judeo-Arabic reading communities in India and Baghdad were directly linked to the colonial trade system, as evidenced by their abundant information on rates and prices, merchandise, shipping schedules, and British commercial interests in India (Bashkin, "Why?" 105).

As for Ladino, catalysts of local publishing included political and economic factors such as the recent Ottoman reforms (Stein 56–57). In the second half of the nineteenth century, a coterie of Ladino-speaking autodidacts scattered throughout the Middle East and southeastern Europe (but centered in Ottoman port cities) began publishing in the Ladino press and translating Hebrew and Western literatures. As Julia Cohen and Sarah Stein write, "Living in the midst of imperial reorganization, a growing push toward secularization in their own communities, and increasingly frequent contact with individuals and ideas from abroad, they responded . . . by expressing . . . a sense of belonging to a global Jewish community and to the Ottoman state" (351). This paradigm is embodied by the Bulgarian Jewish scholar Menahem Farhi (ca. 1836–1916), who wrote for the Hebrew-language press, produced a Ladino-language Hebrew grammar book, and wrote poetry in Aramaic and Hebrew, among other Jewish-language cultural endeavors (354). Thus, as these examples from the eastern and western flanks of the Jewish world demonstrate, economic forces as well as new technologies drive the production of Jewish print culture, whose circulation is then subject to changing economic and political contexts.

Address

When texts circulate beyond their cultures of origin, they inevitably address new and unintended audiences (Allan). Only a small subset of literature imagines itself as global in its address. At the same time, the national address of a literary work cannot always be sustained once the text circulates beyond its original audience. Writing in a Jewish language, particularly until the mid-twentieth century, was directed at a Jewish audience; yet this audience was spread out across multiple national and imperial centers, and the readers' location and commitment to a Jewish language could not always be guaranteed. Questions of national and diasporic address haunted a generation of Hebrew and Yiddish writers whose modernist literary works reflect on the breakdown and reorganization of Jewish linguistic and literary culture in the twentieth century.²⁴

Moreover, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, literature was a major vehicle of social reform throughout the Jewish world. Texts addressed themselves to their readers, at times literally, in the hope of shaping educated readerships who could then serve as agents of enlightenment. This was the case not only for Hebrew but also for Yiddish, Ladino, and Judeo-Arabic. The two most important Yiddish writers, S. Y. Abramovitsh and Sholem Aleichem, created folksy literary personas to foster the illusion of direct and personal storytelling, while writing protomodernist fiction. They reached a broad Jewish audience, with narrative personas who spoke in a Yiddish literary idiom that mimicked the discourse of the Jewish shtetls. In the Arabic-speaking Jewish world, modernizing rabbis (many of whom were equally committed to religious and secular scholarship) used the new medium of the Hebrew press to address both local and distant Jewish readers. In their own communities, they advocated educational reforms and derided "unenlightened" beliefs and practices, whereas they sought to dissem-

inate their distinct "Eastern" Jewish perspective on the Haskalah through the European Hebrew press (Levy, "Jewish Writers"). Later, even as Jewish literature took on a more self-consciously aesthetic (i.e., autonomous) and less didactic function, it often retained an explicit language politics and clear social agenda.

These issues of address become more complicated as Jewish writers turn to non-Jewish languages, such as standard Arabic and Russian. In the nineteenth century, Jewish writers of literary Arabic addressing non-Jewish readerships freely quoted Islamic sources in their publications on Jewish themes, rhetorically demonstrating their own arguments about a shared Judeo-Islamic heritage; their writing is as much a part of the modern Arabic renaissance (*nahda*) as it is "Jewish literature" (Levy, "Jewish Writers" and "Reorienting"). The twentieth-century writer Samir Naqqash (1938–2004) was an Iraqi Jew who immigrated to Israel as an adolescent but rejected Hebrew, writing in Arabic while exhaustively annotating obscure Jewish linguistic and cultural references. As a Jew who insisted on writing in Arabic, he spurned a local Hebrew readership; yet his writing, published in Israel, was blockaded by Arab countries and thus could not reach its intended readership, leaving him without an audience. Jewish authors writing in Russian include Osip Mandelstam, who wrote about his Jewish past with coded ambivalence and converted to Protestantism, and Isaac Babel, who described the Jewish milieu of Odessa in brilliant modernist prose that has become central to the Russian literary canon. Whatever its intended audience, once a given work circulates beyond its original target readership it addresses new audiences with different expectations.

Toward a New Jewish World Literature? Two Case Studies

In this section we consider the interplay of language, translation, circulation, and ad-

dress in writing by Jewish communities in different regions during the Haskalah and its aftermath. Our intent here is twofold: we seek to bridge the diverse parts of the Jewish literary world, which have not yet undergone significant comparative study, and to bring our methodology to bear on the study of Jewish literature as world literature. First, we will look at an example of a popular work from the metropolitan center that circulated in geographically and culturally diffuse Jewish contexts through translation. We will then consider a case study of the circulation and translation of a Jewish literary work across boundaries of language and culture in the Jewish world. These two examples illustrate how the transregional circulation of literature served a broader process of cultural modernization throughout the Jewish world, while also bringing the broader world into Jewish culture. In exploring the “modern world,” Jewish writers absorbed the literary developments of their surrounding non-Jewish societies while rewriting and translating earlier Jewish works. Many canonical Jewish writers who wrote in major European languages, such as Heine, Kafka, and Else Lasker-Schüler, were keenly aware of developments in Hebrew and Yiddish, and their work also influenced Jewish-language writing. However, to reveal the circuitry of Jewish-language writing and its place in the world literary scene, our essay focuses on writers who used Jewish languages.

Part 1: The Multilingual Mysteries of Paris

Here we examine how the dissemination of a popular European novel in Hebrew, Yiddish, Judeo-Arabic, and Ladino helped forge a transnational network of Jewish literary culture. Our analysis reveals the shared connections to the universal discourses of modernity circulating in the post-Enlightenment period and highlights the story’s modernizing function as a *roman-feuilleton* (serialized novel) in print journalism.

Eugène Sue’s immensely popular Gothic novel *Les mystères de Paris* (*The Mysteries of Paris*) was published serially in Paris between 1842 and 1843 and quickly translated into numerous European languages, including German and Russian. Daniel Couégnas has argued that the *roman-feuilleton* was the last precursor to the novel’s “golden age” in the late nineteenth century; industrialization, urbanization, and technical advances all contributed to the emergence of a mass market for publishing (325; see also Tortonese). The novel’s opening lines welcome the reader into a seedy Parisian underworld and its sociolect: “Un *tapis-franc*, en argot de vol et de meurtre, signifie un estaminet ou un cabaret du plus bas étage” (“A *tapis-franc*, in the argot of robbery and murder, means a tavern or cabaret of the lowest level” [33]).²⁵ The aristocratic protagonist moves between this gritty criminal world and elite French society. *The Mysteries* made its way into Yiddish, Hebrew, Ladino, and Judeo-Arabic translations, mostly in serial format, in cities such as Tunis, Calcutta, Vilna, and New York. But whereas in its original metropolitan milieu *The Mysteries* was emblematic of mass culture, in its Jewish-language contexts it played variable roles. The novel’s Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic translators enlisted it in the project of the Haskalah, which was anything but a mass phenomenon, whereas the Yiddish and Ladino translations belonged to vernacular popular culture. This divergence allows us to consider the translation of context that accompanies the process of circulation. At the same time, it helps us understand the modernization project in the “peripheries,” where it is often initiated by an avant-garde elite as part of a highbrow cultural “revival” (as in the cases of Hebrew and Judeo-Arabic) and is later disseminated into popular culture, largely through print journalism.

The Hebrew version of the novel, translated by the Vilna-based writer Kalman Schulman and published in four installments from 1857 to 1860, is one of the first works

of European literature translated into Hebrew, as well as one of the first Hebrew prose novels published (Brenner).²⁶ As such, it not only expanded the market for Hebrew literature among eastern European Jews but also shaped the direction of the Hebrew novel; indeed, Abraham Mapu, author of the “first Hebrew novel,” took note of the translation’s wide success. The audience for secular Hebrew literature at the time was limited to a small number of maskilim. Schulman translated the novel as part of the larger Haskalah project in order to expand the reach of Hebrew, not to replicate the profitable publishing enterprise of the French and German versions. Several letters of praise from important Hebrew literary figures attested to the literary value of the translation.²⁷ Moreover, the translation introduced Schulman’s Hebrew readers to the exotic cosmopolitan world of Paris; most would not yet have seen anything like Sue’s contemporary vision of sordid Paris life portrayed in Hebrew. Writing in a biblical idiom, Schulman struggled to transpose Sue’s description of everyday Parisian life and especially to capture the French argot, choosing the biblical *beyt ha-marze’ah* (house of revelry) for *tapis-franc* (Brenner 10); only rarely does he “Judaize” the text—for example, by referring to Sunday as “Shabbat” (Saturday), the Jewish day of rest (Strauss 74). He also abridged the original and modified it in other ways, removing plot digressions, several erotic scenes, and passages of social commentary on Parisian life (66). The translation accommodates the social mores of a more traditional Jewish audience and in doing so transforms this work of popular French fiction into an important cultural and literary event for a European Jewish audience.

By contrast, the nineteenth-century Yiddish translations of the novel contributed to a growing body of popular fiction based on European romantic novels. These works introduced Jewish readers to new social milieus as well as European bourgeois romantic and

marital norms, thus playing important social and literary roles. But Yiddish intellectuals did not view these translations as meaningful literary events. The first Yiddish translation, by Sh. G. Munk, was published serially between 1865 and 1866 in Warsaw. Munk did not situate the novel in the Jewish intellectual tradition, as had Schulman. In place of poems and statements by important intellectual figures, his preface was only a four-page summary of the intricate romantic plot. Inspired by the translation’s success, similar titles proliferated throughout centers of Yiddish reading in Odessa and Vilna. Around the turn of the century, Yohann Paley, the editor of *Yiddishe Tageblatt* (*Jewish Daily News*), published his own translation of the novel (Kellman 20).²⁸ Before presenting Paris’s seedy underworld to his audience, Paley educates his readers about the city, explaining that Paris is a city of “fashion” and “civilization.” Yiddish publishers in New York also began producing translations and adaptations of more-serious modern European fiction that met with wide success, including works by Tolstoy, Zola, de Maupassant, and others.²⁹ Directed at a popular audience, these works introduced readers to non-Jewish lives; though the novels largely involved upper-class men and women in foreign lands, they helped acclimate readers to their new circumstances in the United States.³⁰

The novel found its way into Ladino in 1891, when it was published serially by the leading Ladino periodical *El tiempo* (Constantinople, 1872–1930), which in 1893 (Stein 264n62) also enthusiastically advertised the novel in book form: “Men! Women! Old and young! Read this most interesting and instructive book!” (197). Its translator, David Fresco (1853–1933), editor in chief of *El tiempo*, was among the best-known Sephardi journalists of his day; an ardent Hebraist, he was nonetheless a fierce opponent of Zionism. Paradoxically, while he maintained that Ladino held no future, he wrote in La-

dino throughout his career (J. P. Cohen). His translation of Sue's novel was a paradigmatic moment in the formation of a modern Ladino literature. As Olga Borovaya explains, Ladino, like so many other new literatures in the mid-nineteenth century, "faced the lack of most modern genres and discovered French literature as a great source of borrowing" ("Serialized Novel" 34). Yet once absorbed into Ladino, the French originals underwent considerable changes. Sephardi readers were accustomed to religious writings and folklore, so the modern concept of individual authorship was alien to them. Ladino translators therefore saw themselves as coauthors or rewriters, yet they often did not even sign their names to their published translations (37–39). They felt free even to rewrite titles, as with "Ben Ghiat's rewriting of Victor Hugo's *Le roi s'amuse* under the title *La maldision del giudio* (The Curse of the Jew)" (39). Serialization was another of the Ladino novel's characteristic features (40). Fresco's translation and publication of the novel in the pages of *El tiempo* was thus a quintessential example of the Ladino path to literary modernity—one that, as with Yiddish, was beset by internal contradictions as its practitioners created a modern literary idiom in the very language they repudiated on ideological grounds.

Judeo-Arabic was not fraught with the ideological tensions and anxieties that plagued Yiddish and Ladino, nor was it as beholden to European genres and influences; the most popular genre of modern Judeo-Arabic printing was folk literature. For this reason, the power dynamics informing Hebrew-to-Judeo-Arabic translations differed from those involving Hebrew-to-Yiddish or Hebrew-to-Ladino translations. Until the mid-twentieth century, among Arabic-speaking Jews, Judeo-Arabic printing far outstripped printing in Hebrew or standard Arabic; thousands of Judeo-Arabic books and leaflets (including many translations of European literary works) were printed in the Near

East, North Africa, India, and Livorno (Tobi, "Literature"). Moreover, only a small fraction of the literary output from this period was printed; the rest remained in manuscript form (Avishur, "Sidud").

Shlomo Twena, owner and operator of Calcutta's Hebrew press and the leading force behind literary translation into Judeo-Arabic, published his translation of *The Mysteries* in 1896.³¹ Twena translated *The Mysteries* into Judeo-Arabic from Schulman's Hebrew translation, first serializing it in his newspaper and then reprinting it as a book. A Baghdadi Jew in colonial India, Twena would have been negotiating Hebrew, classical Arabic, colloquial Iraqi-Jewish Arabic, English, and traces of the novel's original French; all these influences appear in his translation, rendering it a marvelously multilingual text. The narrative is written in the Arabic dialect of Iraqi Jews, replete with nonstandard spellings and grammatical quirks, yet the book's title and the chapter titles are given in proper Hebrew, perhaps reflecting the hierarchy of languages in which Hebrew appeared more formal or authoritative. French place names and most of the culturally specific details are omitted, and foreign terms (e.g., *hall*, *lodge*) are transliterated and explained. European loanwords, such as *al-pulis* (the police), are woven seamlessly into the Arabic, as are Hebrew loanwords unique to Iraqi-Jewish Arabic, like *rijal awil*, a pathetic or miserable man—from *rajul* (man) in classical Arabic and *avel* (in mourning) in Hebrew (1). The creolized nature of the language reflects its target readership, a small ethnolinguistic community. Like the Hebrew and Yiddish editions, Twena's translation simplifies and abridges the original French text, striving to convey its plot rather than its atmosphere or cultural detail. In his overall tone and orientation, Twena follows the Hebrew version, striking a balance between scintillation and explanation.

Translations of *The Mysteries* into Hebrew and, four decades later, into Judeo-

Arabic were undertaken in the ethos of the Haskalah movement, in which translation played multiple key roles: it served a didactic function, instilled a new literary consciousness, created a reading public, and modernized the language. The circulation of this text from Hebrew into Judeo-Arabic also demonstrates that the Haskalah was not an exclusively European Jewish phenomenon. In the original French, *The Mysteries* was a popular (lowbrow) novel. Translated into Hebrew, at a time when Hebrew readers were a select few, it became highbrow, part of the revival of an elite language. In Ladino, it was popular reading but retained the prestige of its French origins. Translated into Yiddish and Judeo-Arabic, which were implicitly popular languages in their polysystems, the novel changed again—in Yiddish it was sold for profit to a wide audience already accustomed to reading for pleasure, whereas in Judeo-Arabic it was a more limited venture aimed at developing such an audience. In reading these translations comparatively, we witness Jewish readerships negotiating their relations to cultural modernity. Although it is generally (if erroneously) thought that European Jews modernized before their non-European brethren, our analysis reveals that *The Mysteries* served modernizing purposes for Yiddish, Ladino, and Judeo-Arabic readers in roughly similar historical circumstances. The publication of these translations in their various formats helped create popular literary consciousness and contributed directly to the secularization of literature in Jewish languages.

Part 2: *The Later Travels of Benjamin*

Sefer mas'ot r. binyamin mi-tudela ("The Book of the Travels of Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela," henceforth *Mas'ot binyamin*) is an important medieval travel narrative, one of the first of its kind (preceding Marco Polo's by a century). Its author, Benjamin ben Jonah (1130–73), was a Spanish Jew who traveled in

Europe, Asia, and Africa; his work contains important historical information about the twelfth-century Mediterranean world and Asia. Preserved in manuscripts, the book was first printed in Constantinople in 1543 (David). Benjamin belonged to the linguistic and cultural milieu of Islamic Spain; his Hebrew is suffused with Arabic forms, indicating that Arabic was probably his mother tongue (Signer 15). In this section we examine two modern afterlives of this important medieval Hebrew text with an eye to their different aesthetic and ideological objectives. The first is S. Y. Abramovitsh's 1878 Yiddish novel *Kitser masoes binyomen ha-shlishi* (*The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third*); the second is Ezra Haddad's 1945 annotated Arabic translation of *Mas'ot binyamin*. As we will show, both authors turn to this twelfth-century Jewish travelogue to mediate Jewish integration into a larger national community.

In Abramovitsh's hands, the medieval *Mas'ot binyamin* became an important intertext in the eastern European Jewish literary renaissance. Abramovitsh (1835–1917) played a central role in the rise of modern Jewish prose fiction in late-nineteenth-century eastern Europe. Referred to as the grandfather of Yiddish literature and the father of Hebrew literature, he was literate in Russian, Yiddish, and Hebrew. He began his career as a maskil by seeking to lift the Jewish masses up from what he considered their backward and ignorant ways. Like Schulman, in his early career Abramovitsh devoted his energy to translation, including works of natural science, but shortly thereafter began to write prose fiction in Hebrew. However, in the 1870s Abramovitsh moved away from the ideals of the Haskalah, turning to the lower-status Yiddish to create a rich prose style that was popularly embraced. Abramovitsh developed his beloved literary persona and narrator, Mendele the Book Peddler, who served as a literary intermediary; this itinerant insider-outsider sold traditional religious books and occasional

romance fiction to the masses. In the 1890s Abramovitsh began translating his Yiddish works into Hebrew, developing a new novelistic prose style in Hebrew, albeit one that was meant to reach the same audience that read the Yiddish originals.

One of Abramovitsh's best-known novels from this period, *The Brief Travels of Benjamin the Third* satirizes Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement, the region in Imperial Russia where Jews were permitted to settle. The novel aligns itself with a history of travel narratives: its protagonist is clearly a reincarnation of Don Quixote, and as the third Benjamin he follows in the footsteps of Benjamin of Tudela and the nineteenth-century Jewish traveler known as Benjamin the Second.³² The Yiddish novel describes the backward Jewish masses in the shtetl, but with a wink and a nod, addressing itself to an educated Yiddish readership. The narrator, Mendele the Book Peddler, explains, "If our Hebrew authors . . . do not cast off their slumber and render the books of Benjamin's travels into our holy tongue, let me at least abridge them in plain Yiddish" (303). He proceeds to move between mock high and bawdy low registers to "retell" the purported journey of Benjamin and his sidekick, Sendrl, who set out from their shtetl to find the ten lost tribes of Israel with hopes of eventually reaching the Land of Israel. Armed with medieval travelogues and arcane biblical knowledge, the pair have barely departed their village when they are kidnapped and forced into Russian military service by two Jewish captors. Abramovitsh's novel pastiches a variety of literary genres and works, including Yiddish *maysebikhlekh* (chapbooks), romance novels directed at women, Jewish travelogues, and *Don Quixote*, to produce a biting social commentary on Jews in nineteenth-century Russia. It lambastes the small towns and villages of the Pale of Settlement for their ignorance of the modern world, while asking whether Jews have a place in the Russian empire and gesturing toward

an alternative Jewish national identity. Abramovitsh later translated the novel into Hebrew, in 1896. The novel circulated largely in a Jewish context, but an 1885 Polish translation entitled *The Jewish Don Quixote* was well received by non-Jewish audiences and reviewed in the Polish press (Miron and Norich 104).

Over half a century later, *Mas'ot binyamin* was rewritten again—this time not reworked as the basis of a novel but translated into literary Arabic as a monument to Jewish fealty to the Iraqi national project. The Hebrew text of *Mas'ot binyamin* was first printed in Baghdad in 1866, one of the first books produced there in any language (David). In 1945 it was partially translated into Arabic and extensively annotated by Ezra Haddad (1900?–1972), a prominent Baghdadi Jewish educator, author, journalist, and translator. Haddad published the book with a preface by a well-known Muslim historian.³³ Haddad translated the text at a pivotal moment for the Jewish community in Iraq, whose national loyalties were widely questioned in the face of the burgeoning Zionist movement in Palestine. By this time Iraqi Jews had fully embraced standard Arabic, which starting in the early 1930s supplanted Judeo-Arabic even in their internal community publications (Avishur, "Sidud" 251); thus, the choice to translate a classic Hebrew work into Arabic was also an affirmation of the Jewish community's linguistic acculturation.

As opposed to Abramovitsh's Yiddish and Hebrew novels, Haddad's Arabic-language reworking of the text was intended for both Jewish and non-Jewish readers of Arabic. As Orit Bashkin observes, Haddad's translation Arabizes the text, superimposing on the Hebrew original an Arabic vocabulary that is also culturally Islamic. Haddad translates Hebrew terms into Arabic, intersperses information from well-known Muslim geographers and historians throughout the text, and cites the Qur'an and the *hadith* (prophetic traditions [Bashkin, *New Babylonians*

49–52]). In the book's lengthy introduction, Haddad dedicates his translation to all speakers of Arabic (10; see also Bashkin, *New Babylonians* 48). He then applauds the history of religious pluralism in the Muslim empires and contrasts it to the persecution of Jews in the Western Christian empires (14–16; see also Bashkin, *New Babylonians* 49). Haddad also introduces Arabic readers to important Jewish literary personalities of the Spanish golden age, renewing the original text's connection to the Andalusian symbiosis of Jews and Muslims (17–19). In his commentary on Benjamin's visit to Iraq, Haddad constructs "a history of an Iraqi nation from the days of Babylon to the present that had always known a prominent Jewish presence" (Bashkin, *New Babylonians* 52). To that end, as Bashkin notes, Haddad plays off the figure of the foreign traveler; the translator assumes the authoritative role of interpreting Benjamin's medieval descriptions for his contemporary Iraqi audience (55). Through translation into a modern national language, this Arabic-language rewriting of *Mas'ot binyamin* tells a story of acculturation into a national community. If Abramovitsh critiques eastern European Jews' ignorance of their historical and social surroundings and satirizes their exclusion from political and military power, Haddad seems optimistic about securing a place for Jews in the Iraqi national narrative.

Read in juxtaposition, these two examples—the multilingual *Mysteries* and the versions of *Mas'ot binyamin*—illustrate the historical shift from an ethos of modernity focusing on the need for Jewish communities to absorb the changes taking place in the larger world to the nationalist ethos with its emphasis on the inclusive national community of the liberal state. The modernizing agenda dominated the nineteenth-century Jewish press as well as much of the Haskalah-era literature, whereas the nationalist agenda came to the fore during the interwar period in the twentieth century. In both cases the transmis-

sion of key texts between Jewish languages was part of a broader negotiation of modern Jewish identity in a distinctly worldly context. In other words, the decision to translate a wildly popular tale from a gentile context into a Jewish language, and then from one Jewish language to another, was a way of staking a claim in universal modern culture: of declaring oneself a citizen of the world. Rewriting a classic Jewish travel narrative (already an emblem of world literature) as a social commentary or as a demonstration of fealty to a larger national community invests Jewishness with a different meaning, tying the narrative to the place of Jews as a national minority in the Russian empire in the first case and to Iraqi patriotism in the latter. It is through linguistic and cultural translation that both source texts migrate to new cultural-historical contexts and acquire new meanings.

However, the multilingual and transnational literary relations that characterized Jewish writing in the post-Haskalah period were to be radically reconfigured both by the Nazis' destruction of Jewish-language communities and by the State of Israel's nationalist imposition of Hebrew at the expense of diasporic languages. Zionist thinkers embarked on a radical program of Hebrew monolingualism accompanied by a culturally Eurocentric worldview (Raz-Krakotzin, "Zionist Return" 166). The rise of an Israeli national literature in Modern Hebrew occasioned a massive reorganization of the relations among Jewish languages and reoriented Jewish national and cultural politics, obscuring their complex multilingual dynamics. Codifying the Modern Hebrew canon, Israeli literary historiographers also rejected the notion of Hebrew as part of an inherently multilingual field, disparaging Jewish multilingualism as a diasporic phenomenon. Until the past two decades, Hebrew literary history ignored or even suppressed the bilingual and trilingual output of Hebrew writers and imagined a literary teleology that con-

scripted diasporic Hebrew writing into a national narrative.³⁴ As we have demonstrated, this monolingual perspective overlooks the complex nature of Jewish multilingualism and transnationalism from which Modern Hebrew literature emerges.

In this essay, we have offered an alternative model of Jewish literary history: one that brings trajectories of cultural transmission among Jewish and non-Jewish communities to light while crossing the seemingly impermeable borders between East and West. We call for a new Jewish literary studies that places Jewish literatures from eastern, western, and southeastern Europe; Southeast Asia; North Africa; and the Levant into productive dialogue. Furthermore, we demonstrate how this model can and should inform the broader conversation on world literature, which in the past has construed “Jewish literature” as a marginal phenomenon limited to the small pantheon of major-language Jewish writers. We argue that the rich, multilingual body of modern Jewish writing exemplifies the dynamic interaction of diverse literary cultures along circuits of exchange in the so-called global peripheries. When Jewish literary studies internalizes a truly comparative and transnational ethos, it can serve as a model for a more expansive conception of world literature—one that voices a clear alternative to the dominant center-periphery paradigm.

NOTES

1. See *New Literary History*'s special issue on comparison (Felski and Friedman). Other relevant works include Tanoukhi; Hayot; Chow; Figueira; Greenblatt; Apter; and Shih.

2. The arguments advanced by Shih and others build on the earlier insights of postcolonial translation theory, such as Niranjana; Liu. Lionnet and Shih forward the concept of “minor transnationalism” to critique the exclusion of minor and diasporic cultures (and their languages) from the dominant theories of transnationalism. They

suggest the importance of looking at “minor-to-minor networks that circumvent the major altogether” (7–8).

3. Mufti, “Global Comparativism” 476–77; Siskind 353–54. While some scholars have critiqued the Eurocentric discourse of comparative literature through reference to literary histories of the non-West, we have found surprisingly little textual analysis of literature in nonmetropolitan languages in such articles. One exception is Mufti, in “Orientalism” and “Dossier.” Spivak, “Rethinking” and *Death*, and Damrosch juxtapose Western and non-Western texts. Others call for a more inclusive model but skirt around the actual practice of inclusions. The articles in *Literary History in the Global Age*, a 2008 special issue of *New Literary History*, call for an end to Eurocentrism and expansion of the practices of world literature, but few move beyond theory to praxis (R. Cohen).

4. The book reads as a statement about world literature, although Spivak never uses that term (72–73, 85).

5. Harsha Ram critiques this model, examining how Italian and Russian futurism challenge the assumption that modernism was a “purely centripetal impulse” (320).

6. As Amiya Dev notes, “In a multilingual situation there cannot be a true appreciation of a single literature in absolute [linguistic] isolation” (qtd. in Damrosch 27).

7. We rely on David Fishman's definition of a Jewish language as one that is “phonologically, morpho-syntactically, lexico-semantically or orthographically different from that of [languages of] non-Jewish socio-cultural networks” (qtd. in Benor 1068).

8. Kronfeld addresses Deleuze and Guattari's misreading of Kafka—one that persists in, e.g., Casanova. See also Yildiz.

9. A clear distinction between secular and religious cannot be mapped onto nineteenth- and twentieth-century Jewish literature. We use *secular* to refer to genres and practices that structured an emerging cultural realm not governed by Jewish law, and texts that were written and read for nonritualistic purposes.

10. Following Goethe, some scholars focus on how literary texts anticipate a postnational or cosmopolitan worldview (Cheah; Siskind). Moretti introduces distant reading as a method for achieving Goethe's and Marx's vision of *Weltliteratur*.

11. We argue for a methodology of Jewish literary history that considers the conditions of production, reception, and circulation in relation to Jewish audiences and larger literary systems. As Wirth-Nesher notes, a work need not be essentially Jewish and “can inhabit several literary traditions simultaneously” (5). We reject the view of Jewish literature as an autonomous, pseudo-national entity (Wisse). Nor do we view Jewish literature in terms of “race” (Kramer 291).

Haskalah is a Hebrew translation of *die Aufklärung*, or the Enlightenment (Feiner 197, 199–200; see also Pelli 92).

12. Judeo-Arabic is not a single, unified written or spoken language; it comprises the myriad forms of colloquial Arabic spoken in Jewish communities and printed in Hebrew characters.

13. Raz-Krakotzkin, "Orientalism"; Halevi-Wise, "Through the Prism" 9–11 and *Sephardism*; Brann and Sutcliffe 4–5.

14. Schachter, "Orientalism"; Raz-Krakotzkin, "Orientalism" and "Zionist Return."

15. For a promising harbinger of a transnational comparative approach, see Halevi-Wise, *Sephardism*.

16. Chaver; Ezrahi; Finkin, "Constellating"; Kronfeld; Pinsker, *Literary Passports*; Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms*; Seidman.

17. Rokem; Eshel; Yosef; Finkin, "Markish."

18. Agosin, *Passion and Memory*; see also Stavans; Zivin; Foster; Dolle.

19. Alcalay; Balbuena; Berg; Borovaya, *Modern Ladino Culture*; Hochberg; Levy, *Poetic Trespass*; Starr.

20. E.g., Mufti, *Enlightenment*; Yildiz; Miller.

21. Chetrit. On Jewish writing in North Africa, see Tobi, "Flowering." Gottreich discusses Jews in the Moroccan independence movement.

22. On the translation of European novels and modernization, see Siskind 339–41; Borovaya, "Serialized Novel."

23. Estraiikh; Pinsker, "Deciphering"; and Schachter, *Diasporic Modernisms* 85–86, discuss Jewish writers in Berlin.

24. Schachter discusses the relation between literary address and modernist form (*Diasporic Modernisms* 3–28).

25. This and all other unattributed translations are ours.

26. Translation was central to Schulman's maskilic project; Schulman translated works of popular fiction and erudite volumes of history, including Josephus, into Hebrew (Brenner 4).

27. These figures included Adam Ha-Cohen and his son Micah Joseph Levenson.

28. This translation of the novel appears in library catalogs with publication dates of 1909 and 1919, but it was likely published earlier in pamphlet form.

29. Publishers took great liberties with these translations and adaptations, removing descriptive passages and adding material (Kellman 27).

30. Elihayu Shulman offers a history of the serialized novel in *Geshikhte fun der yidisher literature in amerike* ("A History of Yiddish Literature in America" [84–103]).

31. Born in Baghdad in 1855, Twena was sent to Bombay in 1880 as an instructor and religious functionary for the expatriate Baghdadi Jewish community; he resettled in Calcutta, where he founded his press in 1888. He printed seventy-one books in Judeo-Arabic, all of which he wrote, edited, or translated, as well as a weekly Judeo-Arabic newspaper, *Magid mesharim* (1890–1901; "Speaker of Truth" [Avishur, *He-hakham*; "Sifrut" 113; "Sidud

242–43]). The extant copy of his translation of *The Mysteries* is fragmentary, comprising the first three chapters.

32. J. J. Benjamin (b. Fälticeni), a nineteenth-century Romanian-Jewish historian and traveler who adopted the pen name Benjamin II, set out in 1844 on a search for the lost tribes of Israel.

33. A polyglot with a command of all the major Near Eastern languages in addition to European languages, Haddad published widely in Arabic, Hebrew, and English; translated a number of Omar Khayyám's Rubaiyat stanzas from Persian to Hebrew; and published original Hebrew poems (Levy, "Haddad").

34. In Israel there is a rich resistance to the national monolingual and monocultural ideology of Zionism, whether in Israeli Yiddish writing, the Arabic literature of writers such as Naqqash who identify as Arab Jews, the Hebrew works of Palestinian Israelis, or the efforts of Mizrahi writers to create a literary Hebrew idiom characterized by polyglossia and code-switching.

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little-known documents

Lament for the
Left Bank

DJUNA BARNES

INTRODUCTION AND NOTES BY
AARON YALE HEISLER

Introduction

IN 1940 DJUNA BARNES, AUTHOR OF THE NOTORIOUS BUT WEAK-SELLING *NIGHTWOOD* (1936), RECEIVED A COMMISSION FROM HARRY A. Bull, editor of the New York–based society magazine *Town & Country*, to write a short reminiscence of Paris in the 1920s. The Nazi occupation of the erstwhile world capital of the avant-garde gave *Town & Country*’s well-heeled readership reason to be nostalgic for Paris’s glamorous recent past. As for Barnes, despite her dwindling book sales, she still had some celebrity—especially among those American readers who remembered her risqué one-time best seller *Ryder* (1928)—as an artist, journalist, and character of the Paris scene. Struggling with alcoholism and illness, and fiercely private, but desperate for money, she accepted the commission (Herring 242–50). Drawing on material in a notebook she had carried while working as a journalist in the 1920s (Caselli 116), as well as an unpublished 1939 essay, “Farewell Paris,” Barnes took her miniature memoir through several drafts over the course of 1940 and 1941.

The result was “Lament for the Left Bank,” the first new work by this once prolific author in five years. Published in December 1941, as the principal feature of a “gala holiday issue” marking the magazine’s ninety-fifth year—and accompanied by a note declaring Barnes “the most brilliant woman writing English prose today”—the article would, in a sense, represent her farewell to the literary mainstream and to the general reading public. After eventually producing an extraordinary closet tragedy in impenetrable, Jacobean-style blank verse (*The Antiphon*, 1958), she published little, writing an enormous quantity of unpublished poetry in the last twenty-five years of her life, only some of which has begun to emerge in editions by Rebecca Loncraine (Book) and Phillip Herring and Osías Stutman (*Collected Poems*). Barnes died in 1982, soon after the publication of her final authorized work, the poem “Rite of Spring”—an enigmatic three-line “work-in-progress,” apparently about the pain of “purg[ing]” and “re-consider[ing]” the past (“Work”).

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“Lament for the Left Bank” is a valuable document of the burgeoning nostalgia industry surrounding the culture of Paris modernism, and especially of the surviving artists’ involvement in that industry. At once it reflects and contributes to the consolidation of key modernist myths: the literary Lost Generation, the salons of Natalie Clifford Barney and Gertrude Stein, the cult of Jean Cocteau (“he was a malady as deadly as the cholera”), the shattering impact of *The Rite of Spring*, the scandal and revelation of James Joyce’s *Ulysses*. The editor’s note plays up Barnes’s expatriate bona fides and literary connections, situating her among the modernist “advance guard” alongside T. S. Eliot, whose name is pointedly dropped. But Barnes’s technique in the article is more impersonal than such a résumé might lead one to expect. She cultivates a degree of ironic and even defensive detachment in her depiction of modernist Paris that is evocative of, and yet distinct from, some of the more extended efforts in the genre, such as Stein’s *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933) and Ernest Hemingway’s *A Moveable Feast* (1964).

At the same time, Barnes also trades on her privileged perspective to intervene in the emerging mythology. Her portrayal of Ezra Pound, for example, is affectionate and earthy, against the grain of public opinion toward the poet, whose political ideas and reputation for obscure writing were making him increasingly isolated. And the intimate, awestruck portrait of Joyce, in contrast to the more aloof and irreverent treatment of Stein and Cocteau, testifies not just to the deep respect Barnes had for him as an artist but also to her personal feeling for him and his family. The result is a fascinating balance, by turns opaque and hilarious, between the unfamiliar and the familiar—between Barnes’s distinctive style and perspective and what we would now recognize as clichés about the interwar Paris arts scene. As cultural products such as Woody Allen’s *Midnight in Paris* (2011) continue to invoke and market the enduring mystique of modernist Paris, Barnes’s idiosyncratic early formulation of a now familiar brand of nostalgic retrospection—looking back

on a time, not exactly innocent, when art and everyday life alike seemed charged with revolutionary promise—is, curiously enough, more timely than ever.

“Lament for the Left Bank” appeared in a spread alongside “Lament for the Right Bank,” a brief epitaph by Erskine Gwynne for the caricaturist Sem and some of his socialite subjects, under the joint heading “Vantage Ground.” The phrase reappears in the first section of Barnes’s piece. The heading was likely editorial: Barnes seems to have been unsure of it, and on one page of a draft typescript she reverts to the more familiar phrase “Vantage Point” (*Collected Poems* 238). Again, the heading suggests *Town & Country*’s playing up of the privileged individual perspectives of Barnes and Gwynne, underscored by an authentic Sem caricature of the latter included with “Right Bank.” The phrase “Vantage Ground” also hints at the ground war under way on the Continent, the struggle between Axis and Allies for geographic advantage that was menacing the landmarks memorialized by both articles. But Barnes’s use of the term resists those associations: to Barnes, Paris in the 1920s was “Vantage Ground” because of the artists’ community that happened to be in place there, not because of anything especially romantic or historic about the city itself. The advantage it presented was in helping American expatriate artists like herself develop their aesthetics and, above all, reach an audience. Like Pound, they—and she—“would never have been so articulate at home.”

Despite efforts to promote the “gala holiday issue” of *Town & Country*—highlighting Barnes’s contribution—in other Hearst magazines, such as *Harper’s Bazaar*, “Lament for the Left Bank” seems not to have attracted much notice in its day. Since the initial publication, it has never been reprinted in its entirety. In 1995 Andrea Weiss reproduced some of the first page of the published version in her book *Paris Was a Woman* (173). Later a fragmentary draft version, missing its first half, with elements transposed from different typescripts, was published by Herring and Stutman as “Vantage Ground” (*Collected Poems* 235–39), under the

editorial heading “Notes toward the Memoirs.” But the editors seem unaware that “Vantage Ground” is actually a draft for “Lament for the Left Bank.” They also reprint two other incomplete pieces, “Farewell Paris” and “A Way of Life,” from which Barnes drew material for “Lament.”

“Lament for the Left Bank” is accompanied here by notes, some of which provide information about fixtures and figures of Paris life that Barnes might have expected her readers to be familiar with. (*Town & Country* in those days was full of ads for leisure travel destinations.) Barnes’s frame of reference was never quite that of her contemporaries, and the passage of time has made her perspective even harder for outsiders to approach without help—while also making it that much more seductive.

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Lament for the Left Bank

PERSONALLY I WOULD GIVE ALL I HAVE, EXCEPT what I got from it, to be back in Paris again as it was, sitting at a bistro table with its iron legs in the sawdust from the escar-got baskets, the cheap, badly-pressed cotton napkin coming off all over my best cloak—that napkin with its hems always half turned and heavy with the blood-red of yesterday’s burgundy—a carafe of vin ordinaire before me, an oval dish of salade de tomate, a bowl of cress soup, a blanquette de veau, green almonds—anything—only to hear again the sad, angry popping of the taxi horns, the gracious flowing language chattered by clerks off for two hours of food and argument. To see the patchwork theatrical placards on the kiosks, the pink-paper lampoons on the plaster wall of the house across the way (these were to Paris what the *pasquinata* was to Rome).¹

To hear the light rustling of the small trees in their iron corsets as they leaned to the damp air, to smell the garlic and the bad *gros bleu*—the worst of tobaccos—or just to look through the glass front of the restaurant inward where, behind the bar, the patron danced about his capable wife, before the organ-pipe regiment of bottles—red, yellow, green, brown—reiterated in the gigantic mirror, and way down in front the sea-anemone stomachs of the French citizens, napery at neck, talking to their alert women with low brows, tasseled with clipped bangs, dressed in abominable, enduring black, fluted and as dusty as a pauper’s funeral, and over it all the curling vowels and consonants, lacelike and yet indomitable, veering yet stable, a plant in running water which is the French tongue tethered to the French mind.

Yes, this, and to see the fiacre passing, with its lovers, black glove pressed on black

glove (the French lived the gayest life in the fullest mourning): about her neck the sudden crimson of a wanton ribbon, in his button-hole a drop of scarlet approval, and in front of them the dark blue of the driver's cape, shaped by the body, drowsy, heavy, solid, yet filled with blasphemy which, at a tilt, could come out at the whip's and the tongue's end.

Then to cross over to a nearby café for a brandy, a tilleul, a Cointreau, dodging as you went the peculiarly charming traffic—automobiles, street busses, the guards with horse tails floating from the rumps of their helmets, the blue-bloused workingman, the hurrying chambermaid, the screaming market wench with her yard of bread—over to that island of contemplation, the terrace café, the outdoor parlor of France.

And that is the real secret, the secret of that great and fallen country: the open hospitality of the street. Four walls make an argument, a tragedy; the street makes it only a momentary trouble. Here you can come and go. If you meet friends and disagree, you pay your bill and leave; if you “get on,” you go from there to any harmony. At a café you can knit up the raveled sleeve of time, or be as bitter as you like and owe it only to yourself. No house can claim so much. The house holds bitterness, the street does not.

Few American writers took Paris for a literary background,² though Paris was the magnet that drew them toward their own minds, as the Genoa Breughel of Saint Anthony dedicated Flaubert not to Genoa but to himself. Barbusse's *Le Feu* had been devoured.³ Ford Madox Ford chalked up *No More Parades*. There was the German *All Quiet on the Western Front*. E. E. Cummings struck off *The Enormous Room*. From Italy came Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*.

Well?

Those who would not have “amounted to much” (the family always wrote in this vein) would not have amounted to much anywhere.

It was simply more enjoyable amounting to nothing in Paris. Those who did seemed as if they would have “amounted” had they stayed back home. Sinclair Lewis' doorbell will always ring in Main Street. Sherwood Anderson might have ranged from Peking to Puerto Rico, but his heroines would still prefer rising in the western corn. Carl Sandburg (had he been in time) might have crossed wits at the restaurant Magny with Taine and the Goncourt brothers—but Lincoln would have paid the bill.⁴ Can you fancy Steinbeck forgetting the wrath of his particular grapes for any Tokay or Bollinger? Bromfield being Bromfield with a difference?

No. But there were others who, though apparently “terribly American,” could not have been so without Vantage Ground. Ezra Pound cried aloud against America's lack of esthetic. From Rapallo, from the Loire to Orléans, from the Vaucluse to the Drôme, he raised his red beard chanting his Provençal cantos, roaring his discovery of Joyce to *The Little Review* back in the deplorable States, proclaiming his belief in T. S. Eliot to England, his predictions for the musician George Antheil.⁵ Pound was a ferociously kindly man who, marching to “Yankee Doodle,” sang the praises of all good things in other worlds. He would never have been so articulate at home.

Some authors wrote from nostalgia (it was good for them); some from *Sehnsucht*. Little Thornton Wilder, sipping his *formidable* at Lipp's with his great friend, the towering Tunney, thought of Madame de Sévigné and distant Peru, listening to Gene intoning Shakespeare.⁶ William Seabrook was burning with the devil in savage lands, or kicking iron maidens about under his breakfast table in Paris;⁷ Edna St. Vincent Millay ate her *écrevisse*, rognons de veau, or grenouilles (I hope) and drank her vin rosé or downed the snail gathered from suburban tombs, as her husband plunged into the Seine to save a citizen bent on suicide.⁸ France changed their

stomachs if⁹ nothing else. The rescued damsel became their cook.

Of those writers who seem to have been almost entirely deracinated, three stood out. The first was Natalie Barney, whose salon in the rue Jacob is perhaps the most famous for its lack of Americans.¹⁰ Miss Barney entertained French statesmen, aging philosophers, poets, and haggard ladies of the faubourg St. Germain and the Proust tradition.¹¹ Here titles and courtesans swayed among the callas, balancing sea urchins or sherbets, as the case might be, as fair blond ladies in flowing robes plucked at harps. Another was Kay Boyle. She has written almost exclusively of foreign peoples, but she has written as feminine Americans write, with great felicity, but tuned a little high. Then there was Julian Green. It is difficult to say much about him: he was very odd indeed; he *wrote in French*.

Unforgettable, fallen Paris! Who has not loved it for something no other city could offer! What was it? The Luxembourg gardens with granite queens whose outstretched arms were perches for pigeons, children playing under regimented trees, Punch and Judy, hoops and balls rolling silently and, seemingly, alone on a personal promenade?¹² Was it the forgotten bistros remembered by chauffeurs and sparrows? Was it the Tomb of Napoleon, housing the little body in a great casket like a silent piano? The *cirque* and the fairs, the book stalls and the *antiquaires*? The crazy and haunting streets, the incomparable cathedrals, and little churches? Auteuil and Longchamp; grand names watching great horses?¹³ The museums, Cluny, and the Carnavalet, the Guimet where Thaïs (though she is not Thaïs) lies faceless in her crown of rusty hair?¹⁴ Or the Champs-Élysées, the couturiers and perfumers, the flower market and the bird market? All this, deep in time, a time that came to the nose as tobacco, chocolate, and wine.

Strangely enough the greatest influence in the writers' lives of that period were an Amer-

ican, a Frenchman, and a Dubliner: Gertrude Stein, Jean Cocteau, and James Joyce.

Gertrude Stein had resided in Paris long before the war. She had seen the contortions of Cubism, the birth of Futurism, the rise of Vorticism and Dadaism. Back in the days of Johns Hopkins, Gertrude Stein had wielded the scalpel over the human body.¹⁵ She now waved it over the English dictionary. She delighted in amazing the public; to *épater la bourgeoisie* was her amusement. She had written *Three Lives* in intelligible English; on that she turned her back with *Tender Buttons*. She sat beneath Picasso's portrait of herself in the rue de Fleury and told about it all, her stockings rolling about her ankles, a great grave cameo on her great grave bosom, solid and as certain as a rock, with a face that was *almost* imperishable. She had been a pioneer in appreciation of Picasso and the music of Schönberg and Mahler. She now admitted to a "weakness for Hemingway" and, in a lesser degree, the gentle malleability of Sherwood Anderson. She surrounded herself with unknown boys who aspired to letters. Chiefly she patronized herself. She would speak of "Myself and Henry James—"

Some of the Quarter thought her mad, others merely tiresome. Nevertheless, on some few she had a profound influence—on Hemingway certainly. If his past works do not cry it aloud, *For Whom The Bell Tolls* does. The hero Jordan of that book says, "A rose is a rose is an onion." Later: "A stone is a Stein is a rock is a boulder is a pebble." If this is not appreciation and a portrait, what is it? Criticism? That word "pebble"—

Had France made Gertrude Stein? Well, her brother Leo, who had been a foremost critic of painting in the United States, as well as a noted vegetarian, turned up in Paris, that city of chefs, a vegetarian still. It was well that the¹⁶ Steins were people of means. Both vegetables and Picasso come high in Paris.

Back in 1921 or 1922 Crommelynck's *Le Cocu Magnifique* was the rage of the boulevards.

wards,¹⁷ and Jean Cocteau was beginning to be the talk of the town. Everyone was soon copying what he said, ate, did, and wore. Tough little girls from Poland had the vapors when they knew he was lying, pallid and quiet, in his apartment. Frail, small boys from Virginia were trying out opium. Cocteau was as fashionable as a new “creation.” With the opening of *Le Boeuf sur le Toit* (the name taken from his ballet)¹⁸ the Cocteau fever reached its height. He was the *bête noire* of the Dadaists—Tristan Tzara, Philippe Soupault, Paul Elouard, Jacques Baron, Robert Desnos, and Louis Aragon—but he was the most positive delight of the young and impressionable, and, as a matter of fact, of a few octogenarians.

Cocteau seemed made of something more ancient than flesh; a plan in bones as excellent as a Gothic perpendicular. His hands were fabulous, long, slender, and aware, moving about him as if detached and curious. Later they lay in white plaster on a black velvet cushion in an exhibition of his designs.

Suave, charming, impeccable, dressed by Chanel, perfumed by *Numéro Cinq*,¹⁹ shod in antelope; sharp and perfect, even to his sharp and perfect eyes, he spoke only to the chosen few. He said, “I rehabilitate the commonplace.” His teeth were very near the skin, the skin very near the skeleton. He said, “*Le café-concert est souvent pur; le théâtre toujours corrompu!*”²⁰

He set his Tragic Muse on the circus horse. Fratellini and Hamlet met.²¹ Greek legend, Christian morality, and the street fair were brought together. In his *Orphée*, death comes for Eurydice in the black rubber gloves of the surgeon. Horses tapped; glaziers were also angels; and Madame Pitoëff walked backward into mirrors with less trepidation than Alice did in getting into Wonderland.²² “His conjuring tricks,” James Lover said, “so far from making death ridiculous, make conjuring terrible.”²³

His experience under opium was printed, and a goodly number of people who had never

set eyes on him took to the pipe and pellet. He was said to be indirectly responsible for the suicide of a girl who had read *Les Enfants Terribles*. This shocking event gave Cocteau an idea. He let it “get about” that he was on the point of taking Holy Orders. His following, almost to a man, smelling deliciously of *Numéro Cinq*, dressed by Chanel, tiptoeing on antelope, entered the Church. Carefully dusting two puce gloves together, Cocteau tiptoed out.²⁴ It did little good, a new group formed, they ran to his piping like the rats to the Piper of Hamelin. He was not just a rage, he was a malady as deadly as the cholera. He was loved and he was hated, he was never ignored.

Then one day in February, 1922, something else happened. A copy of a book, bound in blue and named *Ulysses*, appeared in the window of Sylvia Beach’s bookshop, Shakespeare & Co. Expatriate pens stood still. Wasn’t this that book that had been, in its serial form in *The Little Review*, hailed into court before it had reached many pages? It was. Pernod, Byrrh, Dubonnet, Cognac stood motionless in their glasses. This time writers were floored. They wept in joy and copied in despair. Some even returned home deflated and yet proud. Under the last shirt in the last suitcase lay a copy of that blue book, banned both in England and America. James Augustine Joyce (he was baptized Augusta, due to some confusion in the mind of the parish clerk of Rathgar) was ushering out an age.

Joyce, born in the troubled times of Parnell, educated at Clongowes and Belvedere (at one time he had serious thoughts of the priesthood), had, overnight, changed the perspective of all who embraced the hope of a literary career. He was living, though seldom seen, in great poverty in the rue de l’Université. Seen or not seen, he was pounced upon in the body of this new, astounding work.

Little magazines, *This Quarter*, *transition*, *The Transatlantic Review*, tore him apart in discussion. Portions of the book now

entitled *Finnegans Wake* were first seen in *transition* under its temporary title, *Work in Progress*.²⁵ Everyone re-read *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*; his early poems were put to music by impassioned minor composers in unknown garrets. Once in a blue moon someone was in demand for cocktails because he had seen Joyce either at the Deux Magots²⁶ or, less often, at the Gypsy Bar, sipping his then favorite drink, a concoction of anise-*pernod-susse et fine*—the strongest drink known to man.

Stein's star, Cocteau's moon, had set.

Joyce was as poor as Job; he lived and had his being in a single room with his wife Nora and his daughter Lucia. His son Giorgio slept under the roof. When Joyce's birthday came around Nora could not, much to her distress,²⁷ procure him the two worldly things his soul desired, a finger ring of iron and a perfume called Apopanax.²⁸ When Nora wasn't worried, she was as gay and witty as any daughter of Erin.

Joyce himself was another matter. Tall, silent, and thin, with an ancient dignity, a flat-backed head that ran scrupulously into the line of his neck, a patch over one eye, a fine nose, a small, martyred, satyric, and stubborn mouth—you have Joyce—the Grand Inquisitor come to judge himself. To ask him a question was to receive a cold, terrible gaze. Joyce alone could question Joyce. Proust was called his "father," but Proust was still "unknown."

All this, and Paris too! What do we, who have known Paris, not owe her? You could take away what you could keep. If it was everything, you could have that also. There were gayer days then than were ever known anywhere else, and sadder. There was the excitement of the short-lived theatre, the *Cigale*, backed by the Count de Beaumont.²⁹ There was the Ballet Russe and its Picasso woman curtain, a great pink, hard creature running across the sand. There was "Sacre du Prin-

temps" and the young English girl (going under an old Russian name) who nearly danced herself to death in it and was picked up unconscious and famous.³⁰

You could get wisdom at the Sorbonne, talk to scholars, argue with great metaphysicians, rub shoulders with plush ladies of the theatre.

You could meet almost anyone if you wanted to enough. This you cannot and could not do in the United States—nor, of course, in Paris either if you were a complete idiot. But you could if you were intelligent and interested. This point has not been brought out often enough.

Then too you could go to the Devil if you wanted, if that was your ultimate destination. You could either become something at the Beaux-Arts or nothing at all at the Quatz 'Arts.³¹ You might enrich yourself with visits to the places where Balzac worked, or you could go to Zelli's or Ciro's and go berserk as a bronco, and wake in the morning groaning aloud that you had not taken in the opera, or at least dined in the Bois at the Pré-Catelan or the Château de Madrid, or at worst taken in the Grand Guignol and in a grisly mood ended up at the Halles on "Black Velvet" (that one thing *had* to be done no matter *who* or what you were).³²

As I write, it now seems utterly enviable to be in either state or condition. What did it matter as long as Paris was there?

The dreadful thing is not that all these things were done, but that they are over.

The author: Djuna Barnes is considered by the "advance guard" to be the most brilliant woman writing English prose today. Born in Croton-on-Hudson,³³ she worked on newspapers in New York, and after the appearance of her first book, "A Night Among the Horses," a collection of short stories, went to Paris, where she wrote the anonymous "Ladies' Almanack." Her novel "Ryder" was followed by "Nightwood," published simultaneously in England

and America, the U. S. edition with an introduction by T. S. Eliot.

EDITOR'S NOTES

1. Or *pasquinade*, an anonymous lampoon posted in a public place, from *Pasquino*, the name of a famous "talking statue" in Rome dating from antiquity on which satirical epigrams have been posted since the seventeenth century. Some of Barnes's unpublished late draft poems are spoken by a sardonic "Dan Pasquin."

2. Barnes must have imagined herself, with *Nightwood*, to be a notable exception.

3. Henri Barbusse's *Le feu* (1916), known in English as *Under Fire*, was an early novel depicting soldiers' experiences of the First World War. Erich Maria Remarque's *Im Westen nichts Neues* (1929; *All Quiet on the Western Front*), which Barnes also mentions, may have been influenced by it.

4. The Flaubert circle, including the Goncourts and the critic Hippolyte Taine, met twice a month in the Latin Quarter during the 1860s and 1870s for *les diners Magny*. Sandburg had recently won the Pulitzer Prize for *The War Years* (1939), the second of his biographies of Abraham Lincoln (the first being *The Prairie Years*, published in 1926).

5. Antheil, the self-proclaimed "Bad Boy" of modern music, helped Pound compose *Le testament* (1924), a setting of poetry by François Villon. In the draft pages for "Lament," Barnes offers conflicting accounts of an outlandish story involving a performance of Antheil's "opera for eight pianos and a fog horn," which, before the pianists can even arrive, brings down "a rain of hisses, ripe tomatoes, and opened umbrellas in the audience where Picasso sat, and Joyce and Pound, and everyone that mattered from the countesses and kings to the concierge and cooks" (*Collected Poems* 8, 237). The composition and performance resist identification, but Herring in his notes to *Collected Poems* speculates that Barnes had the premiere of Antheil's *Ballet mécanique* (1926) in mind (237n14).

6. James Joseph "Gene" Tunney was a boxer, the world heavyweight champion in 1926–28. The Brasserie Lipp ("Lipp's") was—and still is—a busy bar and grill, which, according to Barnes, was "famous for its beer and frankfurters" (*Collected Poems* 259).

7. Seabrook was a journalist and "adventurer" (as the jacket copy of his 1933 book *Air Adventure* styles him), specializing in exotic sensation and the occult. He wrote a series of best sellers, starting with *The Magic Island* (1929), an account of voodoo rites in Haiti, which, among other things, can be credited with introducing the zombie to the American popular imagination. Its follow-up, *Jungle Ways*

(1930), about sorcery and cannibalism in West Africa, notoriously documented Seabrook's own experiments with cooking and eating human flesh (ostensibly procured for him by a friend at the Sorbonne). Barnes's reference to iron maidens may be an allusion to Seabrook's then-new *Witchcraft: Its Power in the World Today* (1940), a skeptical collection of anecdotes on such subjects as "torture to drive out devils" and Countess Elizabeth Báthory, the "world champion lady vampire of all time."

8. This incident happened in April 1932 (Milford 346–47). Barnes's subsequent claim that the "rescued damsel" (her name was Pauline Venys) became their cook is carried over from "A Way of Life" (*Collected Poems* 244) but has resisted confirmation.

9. End of page 92 in original publication. Article continues on page 136.

10. Barney's lesbian circle was lovingly lampooned by Barnes in her anonymous, privately printed 1928 book *Ladies Almanack* (richly illustrated and ascribed to a "lady of fashion").

11. The Faubourg St. Germain is an aristocratic district of Paris.

12. The Luxembourg Gardens is a public park known for its statues of queens, writers, and artists. There was once a marionette theater on the grounds (hence the reference to Punch and Judy).

13. Horse-racing courses (*hippodromes*). Auteuil was the setting for the equestrian events of the 1924 Summer Olympics.

14. The Guimet collects Asian art; it is not clear which piece Barnes refers to, but, given the Guimet's collection, it would not depict Thaïs, the celebrated Athenian hetaera of the era of Alexander the Great. The Cluny holds an important collection of medieval materials, while the Carnaulet collects materials relating to the history of Paris.

15. Stein, under the mentorship of William James (not Henry, whose fellowship Stein claims later in this paragraph), had spent two years at Johns Hopkins Medical School before leaving for Europe in 1902.

16. End of page 136. Article continues on next page.

17. Farce by Fernand Crommelynck, first performed in 1920.

18. Cabaret founded in 1921, which indeed took its name from a ballet by Cocteau and the composer Darius Milhaud.

19. The fragrance Chanel No. 5, introduced in 1921.

20. Quotation from Cocteau's 1918 tract *Le coq et l'arlequin* (33). Barnes probably took the quotation about rehabilitating the commonplace from James Laver's article about Cocteau, discussed below (207). It originates in Cocteau's preface to the published version of his ballet *Les mariés de la tour Eiffel* (1921).

21. The Fratellinis were a family of circus performers popular in Paris after the First World War. End of page 137. Article continues on next page.

22. Ludmilla Pitoëff, a Russian-born comic actress.

23. I.e., James Laver, an English art critic. Barnes slightly misquotes Laver's 1928 article on Cocteau: "This mixture of trick and symbol, so far from making Death ridiculous, makes conjuring terrible" (206). Thanks to Jennifer O'Kell for clearing up this mystery.

24. Cocteau's ostensible conversion to Catholicism happened in 1925 (Walsh 422–23).

25. Barnes later borrowed this working title for her own "Rite of Spring" (discussed below).

26. Café, popular with literary types. An undated black-and-white photograph of the Café des Deux Magots was included with the published version of the article by way of illustration. Barnes interviewed Joyce in 1922 for a profile published in *Vanity Fair* ("James Joyce"). Shortly afterward he apparently presented her with a manuscript of *Ulysses*, a gift she would eventually have to sell to pay off her creditors (O'Neal 140). Her friendship with him is the likely source for the intimate details in this section.

27. End of page 138. Article continues on page 148.

28. Or opoponax, a perfume made from the gum resins of the myrrh tree. Molly Bloom wears it—her stockings are "redolent of opoponax"—in *Ulysses* (357, 682).

29. Count Étienne de Beaumont was part of the circle around Cocteau and produced shows with him, including *Le bœuf sur le toit*, some of them at La Cigale. That theater was not exactly "short-lived"—it had opened in 1887—but Barnes is probably referring to its brief time just before 1927 as a venue for avant-garde performances, including some by the Ballets Russes.

30. The ballet *Le sacre du printemps* (*The Rite of Spring*), scored by Igor Stravinsky, was first produced in 1913 for Serge Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, with choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky. Its first performance, on 29 May 1913, created a famous uproar. Later the ballet was revived, with new choreography by Léonide Massine. This version premiered in 1920 and was performed throughout the 1920s. Barnes is clearly referring to it, not the infamous Nijinsky version; she herself did not arrive in Paris until 1921. The "young English girl (going under an old Russian name)" is Lydia Sokolova, who made a star turn of her role as the Chosen One, a sacrificial virgin who dances herself to death at the ballet's climax. T. S. Eliot singled out "Madame Sokolova" for praise when he reviewed a London performance of the ballet for *The Dial* in 1921 (452). Barnes seems to have had a special interest in *Le sacre du printemps*: as I noted in the introduction, her final authorized publication was a three-line poem called "Rite of Spring," which she claimed to have spent twenty years working on (but nonetheless published under the Joyce-inspired heading "Work-in-Progress"). For a fuller discussion of the ballet's complicated history and Barnes's relation to it, see Heisler.

31. Le Bal des Quat'z'Arts ("4 Arts Ball") was an annual costume party put on by students of painting, sculpture, engraving, and architecture at the École des

Beaux-Arts, in Paris, starting in 1892. It was famous for nudity, debauchery, and provocation.

32. Zelli's and Ciro's were nightclubs. "The Bois" is the Bois de Boulogne, a public park containing the Longchamp and Auteuil hippodromes, as well as hotels, restaurants (including the Pré Catelan and the Château de Madrid, named after a palace built on the site in the sixteenth century and demolished during the French Revolution), and other amusements. The Grand Guignol was a theater famous for gory horror shows. Les Halles was an open-air marketplace, known as "le ventre de Paris," or "the belly of Paris" (after an 1873 novel set there by Émile Zola). Apparently, "Black Velvet" is a cocktail of stout beer and champagne.

33. Actually Cornwall-on-Hudson, a village in Orange County, New York—not to be confused with the more literary Croton-on-Hudson, which is in Westchester County.

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little-known documents

Selections from *Len Lye and the Problem of Popular Films* (1938)

Introduction: Laura (Riding) Jackson’s Film Conscience

IN 1926 THE NEW ZEALAND ARTIST, WRITER, AND BUDDING FILM-MAKER LEN LYE ARRIVED IN LONDON BY WAY OF SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA.

Only twenty-five years old, Lye was still a few years away from his first breakthrough in film: *Tusalava* (1929), a nine-minute animated film composed of over 4,400 drawings that took nearly two years to complete (Horrocks, *Len Lye* 91).¹ The artist would spend the next two decades in London, years in which his association with the General Post Office Film Unit would provide him with the resources he needed to create some of his most famous films, such as *A Colour Box* (1935), *Rainbow Dance* (1936), and *N or NW* (1938).

In December 1925, a young American poet by the name of Laura Gottschalk—soon to change her name to Laura Riding—followed Robert Graves’s advice and moved to London.² While she had yet to publish a book of poems, her poetry had appeared in a number of literary journals, most notably the *Fugitive* (Jacobs xvii). Her first collection, *The Close Chaplet*, was published by Leonard and Virginia Woolf’s Hogarth Press in October 1926.

Laura (Riding) Jackson met Lye in London soon after both had relocated. Poet and artist were of like minds, each equally attuned to the other’s creative sensibilities. In her memoirs, *The Person I Am*, (Riding) Jackson writes that she found in Lye “a manifestation of my basic concern with the promoting of a new unity of values in work directed at least theoretically towards the intensification of human consciousness” (179). The two collaborated on a number of projects. Lye’s drawings often appeared on the covers of works published by the Seizin Press, the publishing house run by (Riding) Jackson and Graves. In turn, (Riding) Jackson and Graves promoted the filmmaker’s work, publishing, in 1930, a collection of Lye’s “experimental prose in the form of letters” titled *No Trouble* (Horrocks, *Art* 53). (Riding) Jackson and Lye also cowrote a 1935 essay titled “Film-making” and a never-developed film scenario, “A Description of Life” (Armstrong 129), both appearing in the Seizin Press’s literary journal, *Epilogue*.

The excerpts that follow are from *Len Lye and the Problem of Popular Films* (1938), a forty-six-page pamphlet written by (Riding) Jackson and

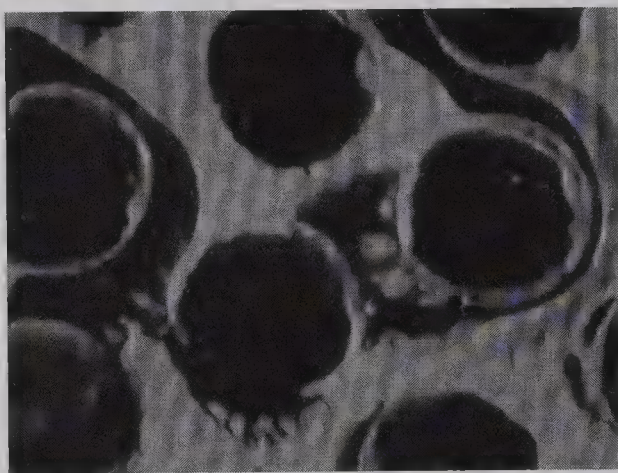
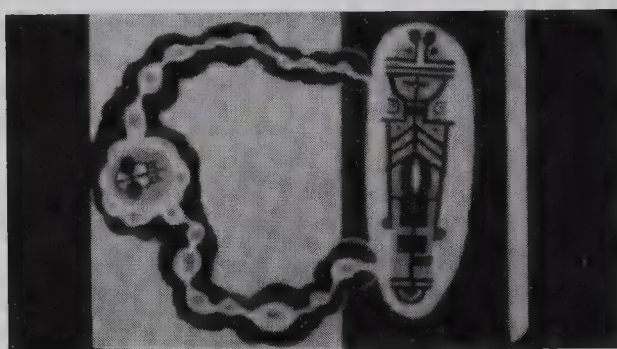
LAURA (RIDING) JACKSON

INTRODUCTION BY
GEORGE FRAGOPOULOS

GEORGE FRAGOPOULOS, assistant professor of English at Queensborough Community College, City University of New York, is coediting a new collection of Laura (Riding) Jackson’s book of stories and essays *Experts Are Puzzled* (Ugly Duckling, forthcoming 2016). He is also working on a book on the aesthetics of silence in twentieth-century film, literature, and culture.

Introduction © 2015 GEORGE FRAGOPOULOS. *Len Lye and the Problem of Popular Films*, by Laura (Riding) Jackson, © CORNELL UNIVERSITY LIBRARY.
PMLA 130.1 (2015), published by the Modern Language Association of America

published by the Seizin Press.³ It has never been reprinted. Initially conceived as the inaugural work in a series titled *Literal Solutions*, the pamphlet, written in cooperation with Lye, was the first extensive examination of the filmmaker's work. These selections belong to the second and longest of the pamphlet's four parts, which contains the chapters "Film Fundamentals," "Colour," "Sound Accompaniments," and "Story and Acting." The excerpts are of particular interest because they find (Riding) Jackson, an astute critic, grappling with the emergence of film as a modern and populist art form.



Frames from Len Lye's *Tusalava* (1929), *A Colour Box* (1935), and *Rainbow Dance* (1936).

Len Lye and the Problem of Popular Films arrived near the end of a first wave of film theory. Following critical and theoretical work being published in groundbreaking modernist film journals such as *Close Up*, (Riding) Jackson's essay attempts to theorize the intersections of the aesthetic and pedagogical potentialities of film. The text echoes some of Dorothy Richardson's "Continuous Performance" columns in *Close Up*, which share (Riding) Jackson's interest in interrogating film's instructive possibilities. Richardson and (Riding) Jackson both strive to develop a critical discourse that can make claims about film's efficacy as an art form. As (Riding) Jackson frames it, "Audiences to-day are being constantly cheated of the education in feeling with which films at this stage of development should be providing them; even the most expert films . . . fail to supply their audiences with an adult emotional language for the succession of emotions they induce" (*Len Lye* 30). Additionally, these early attempts at theorizing film, as Anne Friedberg argues, aimed to define a new art form, one that many viewed only as "entertainment" (3). While film had already been around for decades by the time (Riding) Jackson's pamphlet was published, its viability as an art form was still up for debate, at least in the English-speaking world.⁴

If (Riding) Jackson's place as a central figure in the modernist canon is secure, the same cannot be said about Lye. However, the importance of Lye's contributions to twentieth-century art cannot be overstated. His influence is felt in the most unexpected places. Kevin Jackson has written that Lye "has been credited as the progenitor of the modern-day music video." He is a precursor to the avant-garde filmmaker and occultist Harry Smith, who, in turn, was "a force behind the psychedelic light shows of the late 1960s" (89). Norman McLaren and Stan Brakhage employed techniques similar to Lye's "direct to film" process, in which Lye would paint, scratch, or otherwise manipulate celluloid.

Finally, (Riding) Jackson's theoretical claims and Lye's work prefigure aspects of intermedia art and its attendant theories, most notably "the dynamic exchange between traditionally distinct

artistic and life categories” (H. Higgins 93). For an intermedia artist like Dick Higgins, art is about communication or “immediacy, with a minimum of distractions,” a thought that corresponds with (Riding) Jackson’s notion of film as providing “emotional truth without which” there would only be “shallow pleasure, and a social waste” (*Len Lye* 14). This “immediacy” or “emotional truth” can be understood as fidelity to the inner workings of consciousness and, by extension, to a truth that only art, in this case cinema, can attest. These excerpts document one poet’s attempt to discover that truth.

NOTES

It takes a village to bring archival material to light. I would like to thank Cornell University and the Laura (Riding) Jackson Estate for granting me permission to reprint excerpts from the pamphlet. I would also like to thank Katherine Regan and Liz Muller, at the Cornell University Library; the librarians at the Morgan Library, especially Sheelagh Bevan and Alison Dickey; and the librarians at the Henry W. and Albert A. Berg Collection of English and American Literature at the New York Public Library. I must also acknowledge the support of Mark Jacobs and Jim Tyler. Portions of this research would not have been possible without the invaluable support of a PSC-CUNY grant. Finally, a special thank-you goes to Meghan C. Fox and Laurel Harris for reading my introduction and providing me with invaluable editorial advice.

1. The first animated film “based on ‘modernist primitivism,’” it takes as its title a Samoan word that Lye translated as “‘Everything eventually goes full cycle’” (Horrocks, *Len Lye* 50).
2. Laura Riding changed her name again in 1941, to Laura (Riding) Jackson, after marrying the writer Schuyler B. Jackson. Although the pamphlet was published under the name Laura Riding, for the sake of consistency I refer to the author as Laura (Riding) Jackson throughout.
3. “Problem” in the title is plural on the pamphlet’s cover but is singular throughout the inside of the publication. Alan J. Clark’s bibliography of (Riding) Jackson’s work gives the singular (149), as do most other references to the pamphlet.

4. By the 1920s, French journals such as *Le film* and *Cinéa* had established a tradition of aesthetic respect for the cinema (Friedberg 12).

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Selections from *Len Lye and the Problem of Popular Films* (1938)

Colour

The important emotional turning-points in every good film-story demand genuine colour expression, if they are to be communicated to the audience with effective emphasis and draw from it the appropriate imaginative response. It is first of all necessary in a film to persuade the audience of the real-life plausibility of the story by competent photographic means, including soberly realistic colour effects. But once this is done—and it represents only a minor aspect of the film—there remains the work of infecting the audience with a feeling that it is watching the story at intimate nearness. The use of colour provides delightful and exciting means of capturing the subjective belief of the audience in the importance of what it is witnessing, and of driving home poignancies of a story that might otherwise be missed. The ultimate object of colour in films is to give them a *colour-edge*.

Those of us who have seen Len Lye's colour films can easily understand the difference between a film that has colour-edge and one that is merely coloured. There is no one at work on films to-day who has so lively an understanding of colour problems. In the few films in which he has been able to use colour we have sure signs of the improvements he will be able to introduce into general film style.

Colour fascinates the eye and is therefore a powerful instrument for fixing the attention of the audience on points of interest in films that need individual stress of their own. That films in their present technique of production contain many boring explanatory passages, is due to the roundabout rational method of picturing objects or settings "faithfully"—when their peculiar interest-value for the story could be brilliantly conveyed to the audience by a swift yet memorable colour impression.

Colour in cinema photography can be said to have a function of holding the eye. But it often does no more than entertain the eye with an intriguing colour panorama—instead of leading the eye deep into the story. A colour shot in a recent film was an example of how colour photography loses its point when it merely intrigues. This was a long shot intended to establish the fact that a distant car was a trailer—later to be revealed as the living quarters of the leading characters on honeymoon. The long shot was a panorama against a background of blue mountains; and the appeal of the blue was so strong that it entirely absorbed the eye—the trailer as such was temporarily non-existent. This was not very detrimental to the coherence of the story, since later the trailer episode was made to figure importantly. But it shows the strength of colour as an instrument for commanding attention when it can absorb the eye in a scene even against the story-interest.

The effectiveness of colour in illuminating a story is not dependent on the interplay of many colours at once, but rather on the selection of the proper colour to stress the special colour quality that a scene has from moment to moment, in sympathy with the emotional turns that the story is constantly taking. Colour in films should not merely "paint" the successive scenes, but establish an unbroken flow of colour change—which in its sensitive progression relieves the eye of the fatigue of scene change. It is curious that the strongest general complaint now made against the use of colour in films is that it causes eye-fatigue; yet this is exactly what it should prevent and could prevent if properly composed. The complaint is justified in that up to now the attraction of colour has been made to seem the use of many different colours in contrast with one another in one scene, followed by a combination of contrasting colours in the

next. Thus the eye has no rest at all, and loses its capacity for remembering the significant differences between one scene and another. Colour has indeed the function of pointing contrasts. These, however, should not be the obvious contrasts of colours within the individual scenes—chaotic contrasts—but formative contrasts in the memory between scene and scene and, within the individual scene, suitable juxtapositions of colour to impress its dominating colour quality. . . .

In a realistically produced film there are generally a few simple ramifications of the emotional theme of the story, rendered in a way to put no strain on the understanding: the object is to present the audience with nothing for which it cannot find an easy memory parallel in ordinary experience. But if we were not so afraid of alarming the audience with new “shades” of emotional experience, by giving every emotional turn of the story its full colour reality we could bring into play sensibilities so far ignored in film interpretation, yet actually common enough in the emotional range of ordinary people. The intention should be not to make the film story “colorful,” but rather to render the story’s eventful changes in expressive colour-nuances. If this end were pursued in the use of colour, audiences would be confronted with material that, besides being realistically credible, corresponded directly with their natural activity of emotional change.

The realistic method of presentation is necessary for aspects of the story which remain outside the intimate drama. Every film contains elements which must be objectively rendered. We need to use an objective technique to fix, so to speak, the frame of time and space within which the story, as different from other stories, must develop its peculiar appeal. But, to justify its claim of having a visual interest apart from the ordinary photographic interest of the scenes, a film must display a subjective content—which at pres-

ent is left largely invisible. The neglect of the subjective elements of films concentrates the emotions of the audience on the spectacular sight—and destroys the distinction between the spectacular and the significant.

We do not expect “the masses” to be “thinkers,” or to “understand” art. There is one faculty, however, that they possess surely, and which it is the responsibility of those who provide them with entertainment to serve honestly and develop: the faculty of identifying themselves emotionally with what they see. They may not be able to read critically, or enjoy paintings that invite them to judge of what they see. But films supply the perfect medium of mass enjoyment: demanding not judgement, but spontaneous, unthinking participation in the story as something alive. To limit the participation of the audience to the realistic—or rational, or objective—aspects of a story is to confine their emotional vitality to matter-of-fact street emotions, or polite best-behaviour emotions, or gaping newspaper-reading emotions.

Films to-day are not so successful as they could be in making people relax from their rational preoccupations. To bring about a complete lapse of self-consciousness a film must break down the snob-difference between the audience and what it sees, find the inner emotional level that the film story has in common with the emotional life of people-in-general. There is a sophistication among commercial film-producers of knowing what the masses like: which usually means no more than a talent for rendering the emotionally crude incident as if it were emotionally subtle. It may be fair to rate the “intelligence” of the masses low, but the emotions of ordinary people are extremely quick, fine, flexible and—if no duration is demanded—even profound.

What has all this to do with the use of colour in films, and the colour technique of Len Lye? Colour adds to the power of a film to excite an audience; but, if used recklessly, it insults the audience, is a means of imposing

far more glaring crudities upon it than is possible with black-and-white. The great danger with colour is that it tempts producers to shelve film problems that are still outstanding—the mere addition of colour being held to compensate for a film's inadequacies in other respects. This view of colour might be called "colour brutality"; the use of colour as an added quantity, rather than as an added quality, makes it a weapon of aggression and presumes an even more stupid average audience than does the average film of the black-and-white tradition.

For Len Lye colour is a qualitative instrument. He regards it as having the prime function of making delicately visible such implications as in black-and-white are generally left to the audience's "imagination." If we remind ourselves of the high spots of any recently seen average film, we realize that these were the very parts least dwelt on, that most of the film's energy went into the building up of preparatory detail: we were left to interpret the fleeting high spots as we pleased—which actually meant that behind the film there was an indifference as to how we interpreted them. Colour can be used either to increase the weight of the preparatory detail, and thus render the high spots insignificant; or to subdue and quicken the preparatory detail, and permit of a sensitive dwelling on the high spots.

Audiences approach films in a receptive mood, ready to co-operate emotionally with what they see. But all their good will is wasted, and their emotional faith disappointed, if films are not directed at them intimately, in a way that meets their generosity of interest. People go to the cinema to believe without mental reservation in the stories they see—this belief is their contribution to the value of the film as a communication between their eyes and their feelings. By putting their eyes on the screen they become conscious, through them, of their feelings; and thus the emotional sincerity that a film invokes

in the audience is the final test of its own technical, or visual, sincerity. A film that respects its public can contain no photographic patchwork. It must be all of a piece, with no inactive photographic "asides" intervening between the emotional stimuli sent out by the screen and the expectant sensibilities of the audience.

There are minor parts of a film, however, to which the response is necessarily something less than belief. A house is seen; the response is an automatic, rational one—"I know what that is—a house." The response is, in fact, scarcely visual at all. The sight can be conveyed in a flash, without interrupting the emotional course of the film; and an objective use of colour here would assist the speed of the response. But once the objective existence of a film item is established, then its relevance to the story in which it figures becomes subjective: belief must be established in its intimate significance. To describe the item subjectively, colour would have to be used in a subjective way. It might, objectively seen at one moment, be of one colour, while at another moment its colouring would be determined by the subjective emphasis of the story at that point—and be altogether different in tone from its objective colouring.

If clear subjective treatment of film stories were combined with clear objective treatment, the effect would be to unite on the screen itself the external, visually obvious aspects of a story and its emotional implications for the audience. With the ordinary film to-day the audience is induced to make only a partial interpretation of what it sees; so that after the film a process of involuntary comment goes on in the emotions, without the actual scenes before the eyes to check irrelevant responses. Colour can assist greatly in bringing about an immediate conjunction in the emotions of the audience between the obvious and the unobvious, because it is itself so elastic, so adaptable and sympathetic. . . .

Sound Accompaniments

Sound accompaniments as now used in films are of two kinds: instrumental music and sound effects. Ordinary musical accompaniment has an obvious disadvantage: the musical pieces employed generally stimulate moods on their own account, without sharp reference to the film incidents they support or strict subordination of sound values to pictorial values. A competition arises between reminiscent musical associations and the immediate screen actualities, the music blurring the visual clarity of the film and blunting the audience's contact with the screen.

This disadvantage of conventional musical accompaniment does not appear to be a serious one in a realistically treated film. In such a film many of the emotional implications of the story are left unvisualized; and the music, given the function of dramatizing the unvisualized implications, thus seems to be a legitimate part of the film no matter how unfilm-like in quality.

It should be possible to make a valuable film aid of instrumental or vocal music. But to attempt to define the kind of music that would match film requirements would lead us into intricacies of musical criticism: the unsatisfactoriness of most of the music available for films must be regarded as due somewhat to a failure in music development itself.

In music now all we have to draw on, from the film point of view, is jazz, and the heritage of traditional music, and certain modern experiments within the traditional framework. Neither of the latter two kinds is capable of any close sympathy with the rhythmic technique of films. Len Lye does not regard jazz as the ideal film music. But, until a theory of music develops that can be wholesomely adapted to films, he prefers to rely on jazz for support where music is necessary in a film. Good jazz has an emotional integrity and simplicity that make it a sympathetic if not perfect musical aid in creating the film spell.

Films do something that has never been done before: they expose to view, magically, the actual movement of emotions through all the daily turns of human life. A film takes a given time-series, a story, and shows the emotional stuff of which it is made. To serve such an end, music would have to be as sensitive to the complex emotional patterns into which life casts itself to-day as primitive sound-compositions were to the simple emotional patterns of primitive life—or as folklore music in general was to patterns of localized community emotions.

There would have to be a fresh re-evaluation of musical fundamentals before there could be anything like a new film music—a music concentrated and yet flexible enough in method to reinforce memorably the emotional truthfulness with which films must render their story content.

Until such a music is possible we must rely on what music there is available that has a ready quality of concentratedness and flexibility. Jazz, even because of its unaffected emotional crudeness, is more adaptable to film use, capable of more subtle integration with a film, than formal music. Formal music, indeed, generally supplies a far cruder background of sound than jazz, since it cannot be so honestly interwoven with the living emotions presented on the screen.

Jazz is the only music of our time which is really contemporary in the emotional sense—that is, popular dance music as played by bands, with or without vocal elements. Jazz song, for example, can be peculiarly apt for conveying a stress of nostalgia or abandon at moments of complex significance in a film plot, where people need a simple emotional reminder to guide their feelings among the implications crowding upon them at that point. Honest jazz music can assist in the simplification of the feelings aroused by a film, by its power to cut away superfluous or dishonest emotional reactions. It can also have more than a merely prophylactic or simplifying

effect—be used as a positive structural element. Very often a point is reached in the objective portrayal of a film where realistic means cease to be adequate to convey the inner intensity of the story at that moment. This kind of problem can sometimes be solved by the introduction of a transitional jazz passage creating an appropriate atmosphere of suspense and making a sudden change in the technique of presentation seem emotionally logical.

Any discussion of the possibilities of a sensitive incorporation of music in film structure has an inevitable vagueness—because of the very nature of film problems, for which a fixed solution in any department is a hindrance rather than an advance. It is, indeed, Len Lye's insistence on an open field of solution that is the surest guarantee he gives us of the reliability of his film instincts and technical sensitiveness. His attitude to musical problems provides a clear clue to the mobility of judgement he practises in estimating the visual and aural potentialities of any given film story.

Jazz is not a fixed solution for Len Lye, but it has certain qualities which fit in with his method of *literal* film treatment. The easy human reality of its substance makes it possible for it to be literally built into a film, as an integral element of its dramatic actualities.

It is obvious that jazz musical moods, however honest and emotionally accurate, are extremely limited in variety and associative scope. For the most part—until “something” happens in music itself—we must rely on special sound effects, composed so as to blend with other elements of the film in a strictly coordinated way. Indeed, one can conceive of a method of organized sound effects developed to such a degree of nicety that it will set a standard of dramatic style for proper film music.

In early silent films the external musical accompaniment stimulated the audience to make its own imaginary sound effects. Any such external aids would interfere with the activity of a film of to-day, which is expected to

concentrate within screen compass all the relevant imaginative processes of the audience. Yet the silent film was technically irreproachable in this respect: it did not pretend to be a complete counterpart of the audience's imagination. It made no mystery of its limitations; and anything contributing to the building up of a cinema atmosphere was a legitimate support. The orchestra, for example, could be accepted without embarrassment by the audience, as a necessary part of cinema equipment: no illusion was practised as to where the music “came from,” and any attempts at mystery would have spoiled the artifice.

It is now technically possible to make films fulfil more literally their function of being a sensuous counterpart of the audience's imagination: this is, indeed, the aim that all contemporary films set themselves. Any off-screen accompaniment would now immediately dispel the audience's new illusion of complete identity with the screen world. Nevertheless, much on-screen musical accompaniment to-day fails to be an integral part of the film and makes a confusing division in the audience's imaginative attention. In the old days of silent films it was easy enough for people to accept off-screen aids. Now all aids are supposed to be on-screen, yet sometimes they seem not quite that—and the audience has not even the satisfaction of being able to place the not quite integral elements in the cinema-house itself. In fact, such elements do not even have the reality of the old off-screen effects, but are like concert-hall effects—in careless contradiction of the screen illusion induced in the audience.

For a long time after the introduction of sound films, critical film-goers continued to resent the use of sound on the ground that it was inconsistent with pure cinema quality. Better technical control and treatment of sound has largely removed this objection; and there has grown up an insistence that to achieve pure cinema quality films must exploit the very techniques—sound, colour, and

photographic subjectivity—that were once regarded as superfluous novelties. We must not forget, however, that even in the early days of silent films attempts were made to introduce sound and colour. There were also crude experiments in photographic subjectivity: superimposed inserts of events in the past or in the future, objective dramatizations of things supposed to be going on in the imagination of the characters.

The present technical sophistication in sound, colour and camera methods, and the use of sophisticated types of stories, create the impression that a great advance has been made in the general “intelligence” of films. There is another respect, however, in which it is important for films to be intelligent: films must have emotional intelligence. No amount of technical and literary sophistication can compensate for a lack of emotional articulateness. Audiences to-day are being constantly cheated of the education in feeling with which films at this stage of development should be providing them; even the most expert films shown to-day fail to supply their audiences with an adult emotional language for the succession of emotions they induce.

Len Lye’s film aims hold out hope, in this respect, of a kind that is neither narrowly aesthetic (audiences educated to good taste in films) nor extravagantly cultural (audiences educated to good judgement in ideas). He appreciates the serious responsibility films have of educating people in feeling, in accuracy of feeling—which is not a separate aim from that of providing them with entertaining emotional refreshment. The problem of reconciling an aim of simple entertainment with an aim of education has so far seemed an almost impossible one to solve, for films. It becomes the less formidable, the more strictly we define the kind of education proper to films. The education of people in accuracy of feeling, through films, has no taint of classroom tediousness if they are *shown* emotions—the ceaseless swelling and subsiding and alterna-

tion of feeling that takes place within small units of human experience. A direct intention of making people “feel things” cannot have a wearying effect on them, since that is what they like to do, what they go to films for.

People like to see things, to watch things happen—but only if they can imagine to themselves what it is all about. Most people have no pressing need to understand things; they must, however, in order to live comfortably, be able to feel in their own terms whatever comes to their attention. And they also like to hear things: sound helps them to time their impressions—to remind them when this or that was seen—in relation to other things seen. The modern masses have an urgent and continuous need for confirmation of their being alive in this (to them) amazing world. Films feed their appetite for emotional evidence of the reality of life from one moment to the next; and everything brought into film must therefore be presented to them as newly alive, if it is to provide genuine satisfaction. The sound in a film must give the effect of being newly made, as if heard for the first time; just as the action must seem newly sprung, precipitated into visible being as if for the first time. . . .

People in the mass take easily for granted the whole active expanse of life as it is to-day, its wide and vivid range of experience as compared with the narrower range of other times. But they do not easily take *themselves* for granted. Each of them plays only a very small mechanical part in the whole—they are at a loss to know, from one moment to the next, to what extent they “belong.” They continually doubt their own reality and long to identify themselves with characters of acute realness. They ask themselves unconsciously: how much do we actually feel about our experiences, about ourselves? How important to us are all the personal implications beneath the interesting surface that life presents to us?

The appetite of the masses for stimulation of their own life-interest is indeed so

strong that they will persist in going to the cinema even if films fail to exercise the promised magic. The cinema habit has gradually become irresistible; it might almost be said that people cannot gracefully endure the daily strain of life without films—the kind of easement that films are intended to provide. The history of films corresponds with the growth of a need in the masses for having the extent of their emotional interest in life constantly demonstrated, challenged, re-defined, reduced and expanded, according to their variable sensibilities.

Sound has come to be a very important aid to audiences in reinforcing the actuality of what they see. But sound accompaniments fail to be emotionally revealing if they are used merely to stress incidents which contain a realistic sound element in their own right—such as the breaking of china, the blowing of

a storm, the occurrence of speech in a situation where conversation is obviously taking place. If the problem is to find the right sound accompaniment for an incident in a film story in which someone walks upstairs in a sad and gloomy way, the sound incident at this point should be more than a simple physical record of what it sounds like to walk upstairs in a sad and gloomy way. The person who is walking upstairs in this way is a particular person in a particular story. The walking upstairs, as a visual incident, is sympathetically related to all the other incidents of the story of which we are making an integrated visual exposition. Similarly, as a sound incident, the walking upstairs is not an isolated sound phenomenon, to be related to other experiences of hearing people walk upstairs; it must be treated as an incident in the whole sound composition conceived for the story. . . .

On Bakhtin,
Philosophy, and
Philology: Two Essays

Introduction

MIKHAIL LEONOVICH GASPAROV (1935–2005) WAS ONE OF THE GREATEST AND MOST PROLIFIC RUSSIAN LITERARY SCHOLARS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.¹

Though associated with the Moscow-Tartu school of semiotics, Gasparov’s writings were so diverse and multifaceted—and his scholarly personality so distinct—as to elude categorization.²

Gasparov’s accomplishments are all the more remarkable when measured against the rigid Marxist-Leninist paradigms that ruled humanities education and scholarship in the Soviet Union. A philologist with a special interest in verse form, he managed to sidestep the procrustean bed of Soviet ideology, building instead on the barely tolerated work of the Russian formalists and structuralists. He embraced and developed their goal of turning literary study into an exact science by applying statistical analysis and probability theory to poetics. Gasparov’s scholarship was based on unprecedented amounts of data, which he painstakingly compiled in the precomputer era. However, he was never satisfied with the data as such; he used them to reach profound and unexpected conclusions.

Much of Gasparov’s work is accessible only to specialists, but he also wrote for broad and even popular audiences. He was an indefatigable translator, furnishing his translations with easily readable introductions. His books for students are models of the genre, and a book on Greek mythology and society, *Entertaining Greece* (Занимательная Греция), was a best seller. His *Jottings and Notes* (Записи и выписки), a unique combination of autobiography, poetic translation, vignettes, and aphorisms, made clear that he was a major literary talent in his own right.

Gasparov’s life was not easy. His brief memoirs of childhood, while not without humor, suggest an alarming degree of trauma. Gasparov was a sickly child and survived his school years only because the bullies agreed that “it was no fun to beat him up” (“Школа” 78). He owed his academic career to one of Stalin’s whims. Toward the end of his life, Stalin decided that the Soviet Union should revive the educational model of the humanistic gymnasium. This required considerable recalibration, since the field of classics had been put to death in the 1920s. However, university administrators, who

M. L. GASPAROV

INTRODUCTION AND TRANSLATION
BY MICHAEL WACHTEL

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knew better than to argue with the generalissimo, immediately embraced the directive. The students who enrolled to become the teachers in this newly mandated initiative were by and large those who had been rejected by the more desirable Russian literature programs. Gasparov was among the few who entered by choice. His decision undoubtedly had something to do with his permanent stutter, which prevented him from speaking even his native language with fluency. Though Stalin died shortly thereafter and the idea of the humanistic gymnasium was (rightly) recognized to be incompatible with Soviet reality, students of antiquity were allowed to finish their studies, and classics again became a legitimate research area (“Античность” 309–10). Gasparov began to work in the “antiquity sector” of Moscow’s Institute of World Literature, where he was eventually recognized as an authority.

With the classics as cover, Gasparov analyzed and systematized the Russian poetic tradition, using formal criteria traditionally applied to classics rather than the methods of Soviet scholarship. One of the fruits of this labor was *An Outline of the History of Russian Verse* (Очерк истории русского стиха), a strong candidate for the greatest book ever written on Russian poetry. In a few hundred pages, Gasparov showed the dynamics of Russian verse form from its beginnings through the twentieth century. He singled out the salient characteristics of each period’s poetry in terms of rhyme, meter, rhythm, and stanzaic form. The amount of information in the book is staggering; Gasparov studied more than 100,000 lines of verse to reach his conclusions. A more ambitious, if necessarily less detailed, application of the same methodology was published as *An Outline of the History of European Verse* (Очерк истории европейского стиха), in which Gasparov reconstructed the entire family tree of the European poetic tradition. To write it required a thorough immersion in European verse of all countries—from Lithuania and the Slavic countries to Spain, Germany, France, and England—and all periods, back to the ancient Greek and Roman eras.

This overview cannot do justice either to the subtlety and brilliance of Gasparov’s interpretation of individual poems or to his inquisitive and

far-ranging intellect, but it should make clear that he consistently used a bottom-up methodology. He was convinced that the study of literature, like any science, had measurable and quantifiable elements and that careful and imaginative analysis of these elements could contribute to a better understanding of any literary text. Though intrigued by literary theory, Gasparov had little patience for ahistorical approaches. In his view, the scholar should ask not “What does a given artwork mean to me?” but rather “How did this artwork speak to its contemporaries?” And to understand that communication act, one had to ask formal, structural, and literary-historical questions.³

The two essays published here constitute a spirited defense of philology, the science that loves words. The first, intended for a broad scholarly audience, critiques Mikhail Bakhtin’s scholarship from a philological perspective. In Russia, where Bakhtin’s views were lionized for their anti-Soviet implications, Gasparov was for many years the lone skeptic among serious scholars (Emerson). The second, aimed at the general reader, offers a succinct statement of philology’s goals in ethical terms.

These essays speak differently to readers in the United States, but here too they challenge critical orthodoxies. To begin with, they celebrate philology, which in the last few decades has been either dismissed entirely or reserved for opprobrium.⁴ Second, they question the assumption that interdisciplinary approaches in the humanities lead to better (and better-informed) interpretations. In Gasparov’s view, different disciplines require different methodologies, which are not necessarily complementary. Finally, these essays are written with a disarming directness. Culture for Gasparov was a matter of the utmost importance. In writing for a wide readership, he wished most of all to be understood.

NOTES

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1. The most complete Gasparov bibliography lists 641 items (Gračeva, Orlickij, and Ustinov 75–215).
2. Though he published and collaborated with members of the Moscow-Tartu school, Gasparov considered himself an outsider (Šumilova 312; Gasparov, “Семиотика”).
3. Gasparov was surprisingly well informed about poststructuralism (Šumilova 273–398, 399–417), but he remained dubious of its value (Šumilova 336; Gasparov, “Семиотика” 332).
4. American attempts to rehabilitate the concept of philology include Holquist; Pollock.

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MIKHAIL BAKHTIN WAS A PHILOSOPHER.¹ However, because two of his books were written about Dostoevsky and Rabelais, he is also considered a philologist.² This has caused many misunderstandings. In culture there are creative and scholarly realms. Creative work complicates our understanding of the world by bringing new values into it. Scholarship simplifies our understanding of the world by systematizing and ordering old values. Philosophy, like literature, is a creative realm, but philology is the realm of the scholar. Bakhtin deserves high praise for his creativity, but it would be a mistake to credit him with scholarly accomplishments. A philosopher in the role of a philologist remains creative but manifests creativity in a very unusual way, creating a new literature just as a philosopher creates a new system.

Literary History as a Creative and Scholarly Task: The Case of Bakhtin

In the introduction to the recent collection *Bakhtin and the Classics*, we read that “Bakhtin’s goal was to rewrite the history of European literature.”³ It would be more accurate to say “to rewrite European literature itself.” And still more accurate to say “not to rewrite, but to create anew.”

The new, fantastic literature whose program Bakhtin created was called the *menippea*. This term is confusing in its concreteness; it refers to the Greek satires of Menippus and the Roman satires of Varro, works that have been preserved only in incomprehensible fragments that lend themselves to a dizzying range of interpretations. In the fourth chapter of *Problems of Dostoevsky’s Poetics*, Bakhtin categorizes as *menippean* almost a dozen

works of ancient literature, some of which have not been preserved (Antisthenes, Heraclides, Bion) and some of which have (Petronius, Apuleius, Lucian); he even includes the Hippocratic letters and Boethius. Then he extends the term to all of world literature, viewing as part of the menippean tradition Erasmus, Rabelais, Cervantes, Grimmelshausen, Voltaire, Hoffmann, Balzac, and, finally (if only in part), Dostoevsky. And numerous lesser authors follow in the wake of these famous ones. Almost every work that Bakhtin mentions turns out to be somehow connected to the menippean tradition. The significance of this one literary type is thus hyperbolically magnified at the expense of all others.

There are precedents for such large-scale literary-historical fantasies. In 1903 Hermann Reich published his two-volume *Der Mimus* ["The Mime"]. This monograph constructed a panoramic history of a powerful realistic genre with endless branches, of which only enigmatic names, paltry fragments, and contradictory testimonies had been preserved. Reviewers wrote that Reich "created an entire second dramaturgy of antiquity with his own Shakespeare, who went by the name of Philistion."⁴ Just as Bakhtin did with the menippean tradition, so Reich extended the tradition of the mime centuries back before the English Shakespeare and the Russian Petrushka.⁵ Just as Bakhtin deduced Socratic dialogue from the menippea (*ante litteram*), Reich deduced from the mime the complete peripatetic typology of drama.⁶ No one reproached Reich for reconstructing major literary events on the basis of tiny fragments: in classical philology this is a bitter necessity. He was reproached for putting so much faith in the accuracy of his reconstructions and still more for making out of them a cultural history that was too grandiose and pathos-laden.

Bakhtin knew Reich's book; he mentions it in his monograph on Rabelais.⁷ When Bakhtin studied classics in 1914–18, Reich's *Mimus* was not yet yesterday's philologi-

cal scandal. In Thaddeus Zelinsky's classes, Bakhtin had ample opportunity to recall Reich's methodology of referring to the greatness of works that had not been preserved. It was at precisely this time that the venerable Zelinsky, using these same tried and true philological techniques, was focusing his energies on painstaking reconstructions of lost Greek tragedies ("Tragodoumena").⁸ Of course, Zelinsky made all the appropriate caveats; he was able to stop at the most interesting point and say, "[B]ut let's not look too closely into the void: you can see whatever you want there" (this was in regard to Ariōn's dithyrambs).⁹ Nonetheless, such study of non-existent texts could have been a great temptation. In this instance a creative approach replaced a scholarly one. Reich the philologist did not adopt this creative approach, but Bakhtin the philosopher did. Reich's fantasies have been long forgotten, while Bakhtin's are celebrated throughout Europe.

Unlike Reich, Bakhtin concerns himself not with historical reconstructions but with typological generalizations that he then imagines as concrete reality. In other words, he turns a theoretical construct into a historical fact. Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is apparently at the center of Bakhtin's generalizations, and anything that might have features in common with it, be they ideological, thematic, or stylistic, is on the periphery. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* Bakhtin enumerates fourteen markers of the menippean satire, yet not a single one of them is common to all the examples that he mentions [114–19]. (The menippea is "laughter," but there is nothing humorous in Boethius; the menippea is "the topical," but there is nothing topical in Apuleius; there is no "slum naturalism" in the *Apocolocyntosis*, no "fantasticity" in Horace's satires, etc.) In the final analysis *the menippea* becomes simply an arbitrary evaluative term for everything that Bakhtin personally likes, whatever he considers good and important. Even the conversation of Ras-

kolnikov and Sonia, we might remember, is called “a Christianized Menippea” [155]. From all of world literature what appealed most to Bakhtin was tragic chaos above (in Dostoevsky) and comic chaos below (in Rabelais); in the spirit of the Romantics he rejected the entire regulated sphere in between. He attempted to combine the two types of chaos he deemed acceptable in his concept of the “seriocomic” (*spoudogeloion*) menippea.

Literary historians, especially classicists, are fully aware that such an all-encompassing tradition never existed. But this is usually forgotten, because Bakhtin’s ideas are studied not by literary historians but by literary theorists, on whom Bakhtin’s authoritative claims make a powerful impression. This is particularly true when he speaks with certainty about works of which almost nothing has been preserved, such as Menippus, Varro, or medieval parody. Bakhtin’s detailed analysis of the psychological collision in Varro’s satire *Bimarcus* [117] can only be appreciated by someone who has read the few unintelligible phrases that remain from that satire and the few unintelligible pages written on it by various generations of commentators. A. E. Housman once wrote in a review of Friedrich Marx’s edition of Lucilius, “in his interpretations of the lines that have come down to us, the editor is not always successful, but in the interpretations of those that have not been preserved he is a god.”¹⁰ I dare say that Bakhtin tried to expand the literary-historical void in which one can always see something. As a result, the menippea—that “platonic idea of a genre, *universalia ante rem*” (in René Wellek’s formulation)¹¹—has entered contemporary literary encyclopedias as literary historical fact.

How could Bakhtin, with his serious training in classical philology, have so consciously permitted himself to lead his unprepared readers astray? To this question there can be only one answer: he looked at his material not as a philologist but as a philoso-

pher. The realm of Bakhtin the philosopher is ethics, the study of what should be—rather than philology, the study of what is. Bakhtin transferred to literature his conceptions of what should be. In philosophy, it is axiomatic to contrast our world with the true world—the sharper that contrast, the better. Thus for Bakhtin the menippea was the incarnation of what should be, not of what is, and the less it resembled well-known and generally accepted literature, the dearer it was to him.

He is indifferent to Attic comedy, though its agons are full of Bakhtinian dialogism. He is indifferent to a carnivalesque writer such as Aristophanes (even going out of his way to set him apart from Rabelais in “Forms of Time and the Chronotope in the Novel”), because Aristophanes is too politicized, too goal-oriented in his satire, insufficiently chaotic [*Dialogic Imagination* 219–20]—and in the final analysis simply because he exists as a text and not as a conjecture. Instead, he refers to the *Epidēmiai* of Iōn of Chios and the *Homilai* of Kritias, about which nothing is known except the titles.¹²

He is a philosopher for whom philosophy is less important than philosophizing, who prefers process to system. For him the most important part of philosophy is ethics, which he understands as the realm of the undecided, of choice, of the act as it comes into being. And he transfers this same attitude to literature; for him, the works themselves are less important than their coming into being. He rejects everything that has been preserved because whatever is complete is simply a corpse, of use only to a necrophiliac philology. Through the dead text he wants to see the live person, complete with intentions and intonations, just as the characters in Saltykov-Shchedrin wrote their school essays on “Homer as a poet, a man, and a citizen.”¹³ Yet Bakhtin could not imagine such a Homer and therefore rejected the epic altogether. He renounced poetry in favor of prose and the epic in favor of the novel. Why? Because not

just anyone could write verse, and this made verse authoritarian—that is, bad. But anyone could write a novel, at least in the nineteenth-century sense that “we are all capable of writing one book, the book of our life”—the story of our acts, of our moral choices in the tragic and comic chaos of all undecidedness. If we imagine this story as it is ideally expressed in words we apparently have Bakhtin’s “novel.” But there were no novels of this type in world literature. (Actually, in Russian literature there was one: Herzen’s *My Past and Thoughts*.¹⁴ But it seems that Bakhtin does not once mention it. Why not? Because this was a book that existed.)

And this draws his attention away from real literature to literature that is prehistoric and imagined, where nothing is decided—to a romantic phantasm of an ideal age-old folk creativity. Which, incidentally, despite its prehistoric nature, somehow directly influenced Rabelais more than Aristophanes did. Not the Platonic dialogues (though what could be more open-ended than they are?), because they have been preserved, but “Socratic dialogues generally.” Not drama, because in it dialogue is complete and intelligible, but “dialogism generally,” preferably within the human soul. He wants whatever has not been completed, because only this opens up the possibility of choice: of an act, of a path to God.

The ideology of the menippea was for him the inverted world of carnival. More than anything else Bakhtin wanted to talk about the transcendent—that is, about God (about that God who is present as a third party above every human dialogue). But it is impossible to speak commensurately about God in human language, even without the restrictions of Soviet censorship. One can only speak of God in paradoxes. Carnival was for Bakhtin a form of holy foolishness, superficially trampling on Christian values yet paradoxically affirming them. For Bakhtin both the Socratic dialogues and the crown of thorns are carnivalesque [*Rabelais* 121, 79]. A clear-

thinking outsider would detect a contradiction here; this is why, for example, Maria Iudina categorically declared that the book on Rabelais was anti-Christian.¹⁵ But even for insiders there was a contradiction between the literature that Bakhtin had invented and the actual literature, to the study of which he was at times willing to lower himself. Of literature that actually exists, he recognized only the novel (more precisely, only the *Prüfungs-, Bildungs-, Entwicklungsroman*: other types did not exist for him). But in Bakhtin’s conception this type of novel affirmed the human character as it came into being, whereas carnival affirmed the immutability of human nature. These two things turned out to be mutually exclusive. Thus, Bakhtin the creator of nonexistent literature entered into conflict with Bakhtin the student of literature that actually exists. In his work this conflict remained unresolved, but hidden.

If Bakhtin had had an artistic gift, he might have truly rewritten world literature along different lines. The result would have been something like the “Královédvorský Manuscripts” (which did not, but should have, existed), or Shakespeare’s sonnets in Marshak’s translation (these were not the sonnets Shakespeare wrote, but what they should have been), or, in the most extreme case, something like Kleanthēs’s “Hymn to Zeus” (now *this* is how one should pray to the gods).¹⁶ This was deontological poetry, a truly philosophical approach to word creation. But Bakhtin had no pretensions to artistic abilities, so he only described and discussed this alternative literature. There were also historical precedents for this: in the wilds of seventh-century Gaul, aesthetically minded grammarians (the “Toulouse futurists”) discussed the verses of “four Lucans,” three of whom had never existed.¹⁷

What drives someone to create from within (like a solipsist) another world in place of the real one, another literature in place of the one that is already known? Like the for-

malists, Bakhtin was a child of his time (his parodic rejection of the past closely recalls Shklovsky and Tynyanov's conception of literary evolution).¹⁸ But unlike them, he did not attempt to move with his time but instead pushed against it.¹⁹ Where was he going? Into a solipsistic niche, where he could communicate with God in an unmediated fashion and create his fantastic menippean world, while communicating with people through Medvedev and Voloshinov.²⁰ (After the invention of literature came the invention of scholarship: of an entire scholarly movement, supposedly represented by Medvedev and Voloshinov. In their books one finds a masked pathos of self-affirmation that turns into self-rejection. It recalls Kierkegaard's play with pseudonyms.)²¹

A softer form of solipsism is called egocentrism. To the egocentric, authors are important not for what they are in and of themselves but for what they are for me. Bakhtin calls this dialogism and considers it respect for the Other. Hence his egocentric certainty that we know Shakespeare better than Shakespeare's contemporaries did: "I make Shakespeare great insofar as I read him."²² (Similarly, in Tsvetaeva's memoirs one finds a recurring motif: "How wonderful Belyi and Voloshin were when they were bathed in my radiance!"²³) Here we find another paradox: philology with all its necrophilia respected the Other more than Bakhtin does. The philologist would say, "I exist insofar as I read Shakespeare." Bakhtin's dialogue with the past ultimately covers up an expropriation of the past; it only appears to be a dialogue, because it is one-sided: the past remains silent.

The illusion of dialogue with the text arose from the illusion of first reading. (It was Romanticism that began to cultivate first reading instead of rereading.) We reread a text many times, but each time in a new, unrepeatable spiritual condition, and for this reason we seek something different each time and of course we find it. We are the ones who

change as we look over the text, but it seems to us that the text-interlocutor is changing. Yet in reality it is only a mirror that reflects our changing faces. Bakhtin looks into the mirror at his own "I" but imagines it to be a "you." When Kristeva called dialogism the logic of a dream, perhaps it was this fictiveness that she had in mind.²⁴

A dialogue is an individual's internal condition, which clearly cannot be expressed in a text. It is a phenomenon within the personality, not among personalities. For the interlocutor it is at best something that can be reconstructed. In his notion of dialogue Bakhtin concentrates on himself, not on the Other. This is a form of egocentric self-affirmation: the idea is not to imagine the interlocutor on the basis of one's own words but to imagine oneself on the basis of the interlocutor's words (cf. Mandelshtam's "On the Interlocutor")²⁵—for example, to imagine oneself as the addressee of all of world literature. Egocentrism is aggressive: the interlocutors in a dialogue engage in a battle over the word as sign, fighting for the power of their own meaning. This occurs, probably, because Bakhtin only uses these everyday dialogisms to distract us from his main dialogue with God; in his heart of hearts he looks at them with disdain. And in Voloshinov this battle for language explicitly becomes a class struggle.²⁶ After all, carnival is also first and foremost aggressive. How is carnival opposed to everyday life? Everyday life beats me in accordance with established rules, whereas carnival beats me without any rules whatsoever. Bakhtin surely did not want to laud this: thus we encounter another paradox.

His notion of carnival is itself fantastic. According to Caryl Emerson, the essence of carnival for Bakhtin was that we should look at ourselves from the side and laugh ("Whom are you laughing at? You're laughing at yourselves!"),²⁷ thereby cleansing and perfecting ourselves.²⁸ It is unclear why this cannot be achieved when one is alone, why a

carnavalesque throng is necessary, unless it goes back to the romantic commonplace that everything popular and collective is good. Carnival becomes a refined form of asceticism, which has nothing to do with real forms of carnival culture, the purpose of which is to allow an outlet for aggressive passions that are dangerous for society.

Bakhtin's sense of his right to creation follows from our universal sense of a right to cocreation. This right to cocreation is so obvious to Bakhtin that he takes it for granted at every step of his reading. For him the text does not consist of words that are common to all and therefore not our own; it consists of utterances, each of which is "an unrepeatable event of the text."²⁹ (What certainty in the originality and unrepeatability of one's feelings is required to make such a claim!) Bakhtin derives this unrepeatability of the utterance from its unique intonation, which expresses an intention—but he never considers the fact that this intonation could be understood in different ways. He identifies himself with the interlocutor of a dialogue, be it his neighbor in the tram or Dostoevsky,

and he regards their utterances from the perspective of a creator, from inside, knowing in advance their sense, and not from the perspective of a scholarly reader, who hesitates among various possible intonations and their corresponding interpretations. And Bakhtin attributes cocreative rights to this imperious understanding. Only after Bakhtin did we come to understand that utterances, like words, once uttered, become alien and form a constantly expanding stream of discourse from which one can mechanically scoop out utterances and through bricolage build from them those not very individual texts among which we live.

Let us end this discussion about a creator's right to the nonexistent, the nonestablished, and the unresolved with Bakhtin's utterance on a considerably more important topic that was preserved only in the record of his interlocutor. The subject no longer has anything to do with literature: "But the main thing is this: what really matters is that His existence cannot truly be proved. Detailed realia make everything disappear; faith disappears, truth disappears. It turns into a classification."³⁰

The Ethics of Philology

PHILOLOGY IS THE SCIENCE OF UNDERSTANDING.³¹ The word is ancient, but the concept recent. In the contemporary sense it comes into being between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. This is the time of the founding of historicism, the basis of our contemporary human sciences. Classical philology began when people started to feel the historical distance between themselves and the ancient world that so interested them. Scholars of the Middle Ages also knew, loved, and valued an-

tiquity, but they imagined it entirely in their own image: Aeneas was a knight and Socrates a professor. The Renaissance began to sense that this was wrong, that these familiar images were inadequate, that to understand antiquity correctly an unfamiliar type of knowledge was required. The science of philology offered this knowledge. And classical philology was followed by other types of philology: Romance, Germanic, Slavic. The philological approach was applied first to antiquity and the Middle Ages and then to culture of the most recent times. And all this

occurred because the quickening pace of history increasingly forced us to recognize that what was close in time was distant in spirit.

This recognition did not come easily. Our thinking is egocentric; in the people of other epochs we easily recognize what is similar to us, but we are not eager to notice what is different. For centuries humanism had assumed that man is the measure of all things, yet when applied to all things, that measure turned out to accord not with humanity generally but at times with a citizen of Athens, at times with a Renaissance aristocrat, at times with a modern European professor. For centuries humanism had spoken of eternal values, yet these eternal values revealed themselves to be the temporary values of earlier epochs, cut off from and without application to the values of the present. This is hardly surprising: to enjoy Aeschylus or Tyutchev, we need not constantly bear in mind that the former was a slave owner and the latter a monarchist.³² But pleasure and understanding are different things. There are no eternal values, only temporary ones, and therefore they can be comprehended not in an unmediated fashion—to think otherwise is self-deception—but only by overcoming historical distance. And philology teaches us to set the binoculars of our knowledge at the necessary distance.

Philology brings us closer to the past by distancing us from it. It teaches us to see a great dissimilarity, against which the tiniest similarity becomes more precious and valued. The general reader has the right to relate to literary characters “as if they were living people.” Philologists do not have this right; their duty is to break down this relation into its constituent parts: the author’s relation to the hero and our relation to the author. It has been claimed—though I do not agree—that the distance between Gaev and Chekhov can be intuited by a sensitive ear.³³ But such a sensitive ear is definitely insufficient to fathom the distance between Chekhov and us. Because in this case we must listen not only to

Chekhov but also to ourselves—from a remove and critically.

Philology is difficult not because it demands that we study other systems of values but because it forces us to set aside temporarily our own system of values. It is difficult, though possible, to read all the books that Pushkin read. But it is much harder to forget (even briefly) all the books that Pushkin did not read but that we have read. When we open up a classic, we avoid asking ourselves the most basic question—for whom was this book written?—because we know the most basic answer: not for us. No one knows how Horace imagined his readers in future centuries, but one thing is certain: he did not imagine us. There are people who do not want to read or even to see the letters of Pushkin, Chekhov, and Mayakovsky: “after all they are not written to me.” Yet this same feeling of ethical discomfort, of inappropriate intrusiveness, should trouble the philologist who opens up *Eugene Onegin*, *The Cherry Orchard*, or “A Cloud in Trousers.” We can atone for this intrusiveness only by renouncing ourselves and dissolving in our lofty interlocutor.

Philology begins by distrusting the word.³⁴ We trust only the words of our own language, and the words of another language we experience primarily to the extent that they correspond to ours. If we lose sight of this, if we accept the presumption of a mutual understanding between the writer and the reader, we are consoling ourselves with a soothing lie. Books answer for us not the questions that writers were posing to themselves but those that *we* are in a position to pose to *ourselves*, and these are often different things. Books surround us like mirrors in which we see only our own reflection; if it is not always the same reflection, this is because the mirrors are crooked, each in its own way. Philology studies precisely the way these mirrors are constructed—not what is depicted in them but their material, their form, and the operative laws of verbal optics. In a long and roundabout

way, philology allows us to imagine both the face of the mirror maker and our own face—genuine and unrefracted. But if we are to look only at the reflection (“to go beyond the word,” as some would have it), then we should know in advance that we will find only ourselves.³⁵

Linguistics and literary study vie for philological dominance, linguistics on the offensive and literary study on the defensive (or perhaps deflective). And rightly so. Philology began with the study of dead languages. We all know what dead languages are, but we rarely think that there are also dead literatures, even in living languages. Even when reading the literature of the nineteenth century, we are forced to translate it mentally into the language of our own concepts. That is to say, language in the broadest sense: lexical (everyone is familiar with the *Dictionary of Pushkin's Language*),³⁶ stylistic (such a dictionary has already been begun for the poetry of the twentieth century), on the level of images (on the basis of a frequency dictionary: such dictionaries already exist for certain poets), and on the level of ideas (this is the most distant and important goal, but initial steps have been made).³⁷

Only when we can rely on fundamental works of this type can we recognize among the ever-expanding mass of interpretations of Hamlet's or Gaev's soliloquies those that are at the very least not anachronistic.³⁸ This is not to denigrate other interpretations but only to demarcate the border between the creative work of writers and the cocreativity of their readers and critics.

Linguists have one other advantage over literary scholars. In linguistics there is no evaluative approach: linguists differentiate between words declined and conjugated, bookish and colloquial, archaic and dialectical, but they do not distinguish good words from bad. In contrast, the literary scholar, whether openly or discreetly, seeks to separate good works from bad ones and to focus his attention on the good ones. *Philology*

means “love of the word”: a literary scholar is more discerning in dispensing such love, but also more prejudiced. And that kind of prejudice can hurt favorites and those out of favor in equal measure. How happily we give to Griboedov and Chekhov the honors that they should share with Shakhovskoy and Potapenko!³⁹ It has been said that in Rubens's pictures we appreciate not only *his* works but the works of all the innumerable artists who did not turn into Rubenses. To remember this is the moral duty of each of us, first and foremost of the philologist.

Yury Lotman has said that philology is ethical because it teaches us not to be tempted by simple ways of thinking. I would add that philology is ethical not only in its means but also in its ends: it teaches us not to be spiritually egocentric. (It seems that all arts teach us self-affirmation and all sciences teach us humility.) Every culture builds its present from the bricks of the past; every epoch tends to think that that past was only concerned with providing it with these bricks. But buildings of this type often collapse; old bricks cannot be used everywhere. Philology serves as a technical control board at the construction site, checking that the material is being used correctly. Philology studies the egocentrism of other cultures and thus forces us not to give in to our own egocentrism, not to delude ourselves into thinking that cultures of the past were created for us but to think about how we ourselves should be creating a new culture.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTES

1. “Literary History as a Creative and Scholarly Task: The Case of Bakhtin” was first published as “История литературы как творчество и исследование: Случай Бахтина” in Fleishman, Safran, and Wachtel (1: 23–31).

2. The books are *Rabelais and His World* and *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*.

3. The original passage reads, “Bakhtin's turn to literature from philosophy proper was nothing less than

‘an increasingly ambitious attempt to rewrite the history of Western European literature’” (Branham, *Introd.* xiv). The editor of *Bakhtin and the Classics*, R. Bracht Branham, is quoting here from David Lodge’s *After Bakhtin*.

4. It is unclear which reviewers Gasparov has in mind. However, one need look no further than Reich’s own book to find this claim: “Philistion is the Shakespeare of antiquity or, still better, the British poet is the Philistion of the modern period” (2: 880; my trans.). This passage is cited in a contemporary review that criticizes Reich’s “cult of Philistion” (Körte 543–44).

5. Petrushka, a jester, is a stock character in traditional Russian puppet theater, best known to Western audiences through Stravinsky’s ballet of that name.

6. Gasparov refers to the third chapter of Reich’s book, “Des Aristoteles und der Peripatetiker mimische Studien und mimische Theorie” (1: 231–95).

7. If anything, Gasparov understates Reich’s importance to Bakhtin. In his introduction to *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin devotes three paragraphs to *Der Mimus* (55–56). He praises the book highly, though not without serious reservations.

8. Thaddeus Zelinsky (1859–1944)—more accurately, Tadeusz Zieliński—published in his native Polish and in Russian, German, and Latin. He taught in St. Petersburg (Petrograd) for more than three decades, until he emigrated to Poland in 1920. The reconstructions of lost tragedies were part of his three-volume Russian translation of Sophocles, published in Moscow in 1914. In that publication, Zelinsky fondly recalls working on these texts in his seminars from 1912 to 1914 (Sofokl 3: 193). Bakhtin considered Zelinsky “the closest thing to a teacher I ever had” (Clark and Holquist 30).

9. Sofokl 2: 27.

10. Gasparov paraphrases Housman. The original reads, “For interpreting those words and sentences which we possess in black and white, his aptitude, as we have already seen, is not remarkable; but in the invisible world he is quite at home” (Housman 73).

11. “All these reifications in which Bakhtin indulges can be defended only on the grounds of a theory which believes in universalia ante res, instead of what I and most others think of as universalia in rebus” (Wellek 38).

12. See the glosses in Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination* 21.

13. Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin (1826–89), a satirical writer, was much admired by Gasparov. The citation comes from the work “A Diary of a Provincial in Petersburg” (1872), ch. 5.

14. Alexander Herzen (1812–70) was a Russian socialist and writer.

15. Iudina (1899–1970), one of the great Russian pianists of the twentieth century, was a close friend of Bakhtin’s. In 1946 she was instrumental in getting an early version of his work on Rabelais accepted as a dissertation (Pan’kov 13). Her reference to the Rabelais

book as “blasphemous” is known only from Bakhtin’s recounting of the episode in an interview of 11 October 1973 (Kuznetsov 53). Iudina’s comment should be understood as a reflection either of the changes to the original manuscript required by Soviet censors (Iudina 402–03) or of her preoccupation with Russian Orthodoxy, which became ever stronger in the last decades of her life.

16. Vaclav Hanka (1791–1861), a Czech linguist, poet, scholar, and ardent patriot, claimed to have discovered the “Manuscript of the Queen’s Court” (or “Královédvorský Manuscripts”), containing Czech poems of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They were subsequently proved to be mystifications, written by Hanka himself. “Hanka’s intuition was staggering. He was not a prominent scholar . . . , yet he was able to create the illusion of Old Czech and of Old Czech poetic form so convincingly and in such a refined way that it required many decades of intensive development in Czech philology . . . before it was possible to clearly expose the manuscripts as forgeries” (Jakobson 399). Samuil Marshak (1887–1964) was a Russian poet and translator of, among other things, Shakespeare’s complete sonnets. Gasparov (with N. S. Avtonomova) wrote an essay on these celebrated Shakespeare translations (“Сонеты”), praising their “stylistic unity” but pointing out their anachronistic qualities, since the lexicon and style were based on Russian poetry of the early nineteenth century. Only thirty-eight lines of the “Hymn to Zeus” by Kleantēs (c. 331–c. 232 BCE) have been preserved. In an essay for a nine-volume Russian history of world literature, Gasparov mentions this hymn as an example of how the philosophers of late antiquity used the Olympian gods to personify abstract elemental qualities and first principles (“Литература” 306).

17. The expression “Toulouse futurists” appears to be Gasparov’s invention, intended to remind readers of the Russian cubo-futurists of the early twentieth century (e.g., Velimir Khlebnikov and Aleksey Kruchenykh), whose work teems with neologisms, paronomasia, and other forms of linguistic experimentation. Gasparov refers to an author who existed, though whether he was from Toulouse (or even French) is disputed (Law 2–3). In an article written for the above-mentioned history of world literature, Gasparov wrote of “the works of a grammarian from Toulouse (apparently from the beginning of the seventh century), who wrote under the imposing pseudonym ‘Vergilius Maro’: he writes about ‘twelve Latins,’ about ‘the scrambling of words,’ about anagrams, inversions, abbreviations of words, about languages ‘for making mysteries known,’ and he addresses his writings to his grammarian brothers, who have names like ‘Homer,’ ‘Cicero,’ the three ‘Lucans,’ etc. and refer to unknown grammarian authorities from Romulus’s time who engage in two-week disputes about the vocative case of the word ‘I’ and who consider ‘philosophy’—which includes sciences—to be not so much useful as a means of satisfying curiosity” (“Темные века” 451).

18. According to the Russian formalists Yuri Tynyanov and Viktor Shklovsky, literary traditions “evolved” when authors rejected (often by parody) the work of their immediate predecessors or contemporaries.

19. Both Shklovsky and Tynyanov were fascinated by the art of their time, especially modernism and the avant-garde. Bakhtin had little interest in these recent developments, even in cases where they might have confirmed his ideas.

20. Valentin Voloshinov and Pavel Medvedev were like-minded interlocutors of Bakhtin. Together with Lev Pumpyansky, they formed what later became known as the Bakhtin circle. Several books published under their names are believed to have been written in collaboration with Bakhtin. On these controversies, see Clark and Holquist 146–70; Brandist 1–26.

21. “Kierkegaard insisted upon the importance of his pseudonyms, noted that there were contradictions between their views, [and] begged that anyone quoting from their works would cite the name of the responsible pseudonym” (McKinnon 116).

22. This presumably derives from Bakhtin’s statement that “[w]e can say that neither Shakespeare himself nor his contemporaries knew that ‘great Shakespeare’ whom we know now. There is no possibility of squeezing our Shakespeare into the Elizabethan epoch” (“Response” 4).

23. The great Russian poet Marina Tsvetaeva (1892–1941) wrote a number of memoirs about her contemporaries. Gasparov has in mind “A Living Word about a Living Person” (on Maksimilian Voloshin) and “A Captive Spirit” (on Andrey Bely).

24. Kristeva writes that “[t]his ‘dialogic’ of the coexistence of opposites, quite distinct from the ‘monologic,’ (which presupposes a *tertium non datur*), and discovered by Freud in the unconscious and the dream, is what Bakhtin, with surprising insight, calls ‘the logic of the dream’” (111). Kristeva, however, appears to have misunderstood what Bakhtin meant by “the logic of a dream.” He used the phrase not to describe the concept of dialogue but in the most literal sense, when discussing passages in Dostoevsky that concern dreams (*Problems* 168).

25. In this 1913 essay, Osip Mandelshtam likened a poem to a message in a bottle thrown off a sinking ship and addressed to a future, unknown recipient.

26. Gasparov presumably refers to Voloshinov’s *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, published in 1929.

27. This famous line appears in the fifth act of Gogol’s comedy *The Inspector General*.

28. This summary is either derived from several passages in Emerson, “Coming,” or based on Emerson, “Plenitude” 185.

29. The phrase comes from the essay “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis.” Bakhtin argues that each time a reader returns to the text, the

experience is unique, “a new, unrepeatable event in the life of the text” (“Problem” 106).

30. Собрание сочинений 522. The passage comes from Bakhtin’s conversation of 7 July 1969 with I. L. Krupnik, concerning (among other things) the difference between the two Russian words for truth—правда (*pravda* [truth generally]) and истина (*istina* [the highest truth]). In the passage quoted in the text this latter word is used.

31. “The Ethics of Philology” was first published as “Филология как нравственность” in the Soviet journal Литературное обозрение (“Literary Review”) in 1979 as part of a “roundtable” (a series of brief essays that appeared in a number of issues) on the state of philology in the Soviet Union. Gasparov edited and republished his contribution in Записи и выписки in 2000 (98–100). I used the later text for my translation, though I cite passages from the earlier version in the notes to elucidate otherwise obscure references. Gasparov appended a parenthetical statement about the essay’s origins to orient the post-Soviet reader: the editors of Литературное обозрение “did not want to publish it, but it turned out that M. B. Khrapchenko had selected it for official condemnation. So they had to print it.” Khrapchenko (1904–1986) was a high-ranking Communist Party functionary and literary bureaucrat, a Lenin Prize winner and a “hero of Soviet labor.” His contribution to the philology discussion closed the roundtable. It appeared directly after Gasparov’s, which Khrapchenko criticized at length, in particular objecting to the claim that philology should avoid evaluative judgments (Xrapchenko 31–32).

32. Fedor Tyutchev (1803–73), one of Russia’s great Romantic and mystical poets, was a political archconservative. In Soviet scholarship, this subject was generally avoided.

33. Gaev is the landowner in *The Cherry Orchard*. In the 1979 version of “The Ethics of Philology,” Gasparov names V. V. Kozhinov, the scholar who made this claim (“Филология”). In discussing Gaev (46), Kozhinov himself was following the lead of earlier participants in the philology roundtable (Bilinkis 35–36; Fedorov).

34. The 1979 text makes clear that this comment was polemically directed at Jakov Bilinkis, whose essay “Trust in the Word” opened the philology roundtable. That Bilinkis was allowed to initiate the discussion (his essay immediately preceded that of the far more erudite Dmitry Likhachev) indicates that his views hewed close to the party line. Bilinkis’s overall position can be deduced from his apodictic first sentence: “Over the past two decades the persistent attempts of the adherents of structuralism to examine art as a sign system have clearly not produced any serious results” (34).

35. Gasparov’s Nietzsche-inflected formulation (the Russian for *beyond* [по ту сторону] is the expression used in translating “beyond good and evil”) likely refers to Kozhinov’s essay, where “the word” is considered less important than “the art of the word.” Kozhinov was attacking the formalists in order to champion Bakhtin. In this

sense, Gasparov's complaint here anticipates the arguments he would direct at Bakhtin twenty-five years later.

36. The result of more than fifteen years of preparation, this four-volume dictionary (with a brief supplementary volume) is one of the great achievements of Soviet scholarship. Published between 1956 and 1961, it lists every word Pushkin used and its precise meaning in each usage. In the earlier version of his essay, Gasparov had written, "*The Dictionary of Pushkin's Language* showed its readers how much in Pushkin's semantics had slipped by us, while we, not thinking about how incomplete and unsystematic our knowledge was, were guided by our sensitive ears and subtle taste" ("Филология" 27).

37. This passage appeared in the first version of the essay as well. In 1979 most of these dictionaries were only in the planning stage, but as a member of the Institute of World Literature and of the Academy of Sciences, Gasparov was well aware of them. His colleague V. P. Grigorev, whose contribution to the roundtable singles out Gasparov for praise, also stresses the importance of these dictionaries ("Вкус слова"). A distinguished linguist, Grigorev was himself at work on a dictionary of Soviet poetry, which to date consists of one volume. For other works that Gasparov probably had in mind (some of which only came out decades later), see Bakina; Koževnikova; Ivanova. The first frequency dictionaries had been prepared by members of the Moscow-Tartu school (Minc and Šiškina; Levin).

38. Once again, Gasparov's polemic is directed at an earlier essay. M. Girshman had—with reservations—cited the claim that "it is as if each new reader of *Hamlet* writes the work anew."

39. Aleksandr Shakhovskoy (1777–1846), a writer of comedies, was a towering figure in Russian theatrical life in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Today his works are known primarily because they are briefly mentioned in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*. Ignaty Potapenko (1856–1929), now largely forgotten, was in his day an enormously successful playwright and a friend of Chekhov's. (An episode from his personal life was the transparent model for the plot of *The Seagull*.) Aleksandr Griboedov (1795–1829) was the author of the classic comedy *Woe from Wit*. With these examples, Gasparov emphasizes that only masterpieces are remembered, while the works that paved the way for them are consigned to oblivion (cf. Gasparov, "Мой отец" 74).

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Introduction: Reading Now, after Helen Tartar

CHRIS GOGWILT

THIS CLUSTER OF ESSAYS IS A SELECTION OF PIECES DRAWN FROM A COLLOQUIUM HELD AT FORDHAM UNIVERSITY ON 9 MAY 2014 IN honor of Helen Tartar, the editorial director of Fordham University Press, who was killed in a car accident on 3 March 2014.¹ A legendary humanities editor responsible for having secured the reputation of Stanford University Press as a beacon for critical theory and then having brought to Fordham a stellar array of titles in critical theory, philosophy, literature, anthropology, and religious studies, Helen changed the landscape of academic publishing. To many, her death was a shock of historic proportions, the abrupt cutting off of a still-unfolding epoch of critical theory, an era of interdisciplinary renewal across the humanities and beyond, and the coming-of-age of multimedia comparative literary studies. It is still too soon to measure the full impact of Helen’s editorial genius. The aim of the May colloquium, titled “Reading Now, after Helen Tartar” and organized by Fordham’s comparative literature program in conjunction with Fordham University Press, was to begin the work of assessing Helen’s far-reaching influence, including the significance of her editorial vision for the way we read now.

“Reading Now, after Helen Tartar” sought to work through and beyond the shock of her sudden loss, a shock that has been felt far and wide by countless scholars, authors, editors, and readers. The organizers of the American Comparative Literature Association’s annual meeting at New York University arranged a memorial event on 22 March; and Fordham University Press held a memorial at Fordham University on 8 April. Each event featured tributes from a wide range of authors, friends, and colleagues.² To Judith Butler, speaking both personally and for the many other authors (famous and less well known) whose work depended on Helen’s editorial engagement and steadfast advocacy of scholarship and theory, Helen’s loss epitomizes the precarious situation of all current work in the humanities. The May colloquium was designed, in part, to take up the challenge Butler later articulates—to do justice to Helen’s legacy

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and to the care Helen brought to all aspects of scholarly, critical, and creative reading. When we consider what it means to be reading now—reading in the fullest sense—there is an imperative to think through carefully, listen carefully, and assess carefully the legacy of a life's work that was cut off, so suddenly, by someone's careless driving.

Reading with care was always at the heart of Helen's editorial vision and practice. This care is documented in the pieces collected here, whether they focus on the early stages of reading a manuscript, on the editorial attention paid to making a scholarly argument clear, or on the later stages of producing the physical book. The care for language and translation characteristic of so many of Helen's books is connected with the kind of "European theory" she incubated in Palo Alto and brought with her to the Bronx.³ Helen's commitment to translating European theorists was a hallmark of her success at Stanford. Translations of Jacques Derrida, Jean-Luc Nancy, Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, Emanuel Levinas, Friedrich Kittler, Bernard Stiegler, and Niklas Luhman, as well as series like *Meridian Crossing Aesthetics* (edited by Werner Hamacher), made the Stanford imprint of the 1990s one of the most recognized points of reference within the changing contours of "theory." European theory is most easily associated with French deconstruction; certainly that kind of close attention to reading touched many, though not all, of the strands of theory Helen wove together for Stanford and was still interlacing in the list of books she brought to Fordham.

Helen's contribution to the work of translating French deconstruction shows the extent to which her editorial genius encapsulated an epoch of theory. Two recent books by leading figures in the field of comparative literature—J. Hillis Miller's collection of essays *For Derrida* and Henry Sussman's *Idylls of the Wanderer*—foreground the practice of close, attentive, deconstructive readings as-

sociated with Derrida's work. Each offers a retrospective survey of, and theoretical reflection on, Derrida's shaping influence over the practice of reading in the last thirty years. Each reveals, too, the usually hidden figure of the editor, providing a glimpse of Helen's editorial hand at work cultivating decades of comparative literature. Dedicating *Idylls of the Wanderer* to Helen and affirming "her ongoing advocacy of critical theory, rigor, and invention," Henry Sussman writes that her "editorial practice contains a philosophy of books." Miller writes of his "unrepayable debt" to Helen in the acknowledgments to *For Derrida*; and in one of that book's essays, a reading of Derrida's *On Touching—Jean-Luc Nancy* in which Miller develops an argument that "the hand is already . . . a prosthetic extension of the body," he writes, "As Helen Tartar reminds me, the Confucian *Analec*ts say, 'When making an axehead, the model is not far away'" (248). The editor's craft surfaces suddenly in this moment as a part of the work of reading, of thinking, of theorizing that usually remains hidden in the final product of the book.

It is impossible to name all the books and authors shaped by Helen's editorial hand, not just because the list is too long. Jacques Lezra, referring to the catalog of ships and men with which *The Iliad* begins, shows that the very notion of "Helen's list" presents a reading challenge. As Lezra explores the way another Helen, of Greek myth, figures the list of battle names, he conflates the two Helens while questioning the conflation, inviting us to measure its rhetorical effect against the legacy of "European theory," deconstructive readings, and philology. His tribute refers, too, to Barbara Cassin's essay "Seeing Helen in Every Woman" in her *Sophistical Practice*, a book from Fordham that Helen herself never saw in its final published form. Cassin's argument there returns us to the classic grounds of theory, in multiple senses: to the classics, to classical debates over reading philosophy and

literature, and to the return to philology that characterizes the epoch of theory. *Philology*, indeed, might be another name for the kind of reading with care that lies at the heart of Helen's editorial genius.

Although no single practice of reading can sum up the kind of European theory Helen brought to the Bronx, it is possible to trace a lineage back to the roots of an old European model of comparative literature. Helen positioned herself in such a lineage, in remarks given at a two-day conference on "comparative modernisms, medialities, and modernities" at Fordham and New York University that she organized with Jacques Lezra and me in 2012:

I am a scant two generations away from the early giants of comparative literature in the U. S.: such figures as Erich Auerbach (born in 1892) and Leo Spitzer (born in 1887) were roughly my grandparents' age. In intellectual terms, not until I published *A Scholar's Tale*, the beautiful memoir of Geoffrey Hartman (whose Wordsworth seminar I was fortunate enough to experience as a graduate student), did I realize that as a young scholar he quite literally walked the same streets as Auerbach in New Haven, at a time when I existed, but hadn't yet learned to spell. There is an odd intimacy in this timeframe of comparative literature, even in comparison to the relatively short institutional history of "English." (3–4)

This sketch of her own relation to a certain lineage of comparative literature partly explains the title of one of her most recent, visionary achievements, the Mellon-funded Modern Language Initiative (MLI), whose success the conference was also designed to celebrate. The guiding principles of this initiative reveal the practical genius of Helen's ability to combine old and new models of comparative literature. Committed to publishing books by first-time authors, to publishing books in English on works of any kind in languages other than English, and to collaborating with

a consortium of university presses throughout the United States, the MLI has nurtured, supported, and promoted books that embody a new spirit of comparative study, focusing both on traditional European languages and on non-European languages, as well as on interdisciplinary approaches to literature and multimedia. Notable books published with support from the initiative include Toral Gajrawala's *Untouchable Fictions: Literary Realism and the Crisis of Caste*, Edmund Jacobs's *A Common Strangeness: Contemporary Poetry, Cross-Cultural Encounter, Comparative Literature*, and Yasemin Yildiz's *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition*. To the extent that Helen's editorial practice embodied the best of a European comparatist tradition (or European theory), it was not in curatorial acts of securing or rescuing that European heritage so much as in editorial acts of transforming and reinventing that past for future models of comparative study.

Reading recent titles by established authors that Helen brought to Fordham next to titles by first-time authors in the MLI offers a glimpse of her editorial intervention in the changing landscape of comparative literature and European theory. Helen's list extends well beyond comparative literary studies, too, to include titles in philosophy, anthropology, religious studies, and media theory. Interdisciplinarity was always a dynamic feature of the kind of comparative literature Helen nurtured and sponsored. Junior scholars, working on their first books, were as central to Helen's vision of scholarly publishing as well-known and established authors.

Even the books most closely associated with deconstruction defy the partisan battle lines we might associate with the epoch of theory. Two Fordham University Press board members (both former chairs of the board, one from the philosophy department, the other from the English department) summed up their long tenure on the board (coinciding with Helen's ten years as editorial director)

and their long, collegial acting out of the “ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy” by agreeing that the philosophy list was too full of literary concerns, the literature list too full of philosophy. If this was the sort of disciplinary exchange, practically and institutionally speaking, that Helen was able to turn to everyone’s advantage, it was also the disciplinary difference that makes deconstruction defy partisanship. Helen was by no means, of course, the only editor to publish translations of Derrida or to promote philosophical and literary studies associated (narrowly or broadly) with deconstruction. The distinguished list of books by (and on) Derrida and others that Helen brought to Stanford and Fordham defies any simple classification in part because these books represent a convergence of different occasions, different disciplines, different series (Hent de Vries and Mieke Bal’s *Cultural Memory of the Present*, Hamacher’s *Meridian Crossing Aesthetics*, John D. Caputo’s *Perspectives in Continental Philosophy*). The list also defies classification, in part, because it remains incomplete—not only because of the tragic loss of Helen’s editorial hand in shaping the way we read things now but also because many projects have yet to appear as a result of the work Helen did before her death (before she became that image, the Benjaminian Angel of History, projected in her last e-mail to Judith Butler). We can glimpse her legacy in a short book released in July 2014, a few months after Helen’s death. Jacques Derrida’s *For Strasbourg: Conversations of Friendship and Philosophy*, edited and translated by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas, includes a discussion between Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe, and Nancy from 2004, the final conversation between these three philosophers (jokingly dubbed the three musketeers by Derrida), whose books Helen had published throughout her career. As in the other essays and transcripts collected in that volume—and organized in tribute to the “refuge” that Strasbourg gave

to Derrida (perhaps like the one Fordham provided for Helen after the battle storms of Stanford)⁴—what emerges from this final conversation between the three philosophers of deconstruction is not so much agreement as disagreement. These philosophers’ differences regarding the theories and practices of deconstruction—more simply, reading—are constitutive of their long collaboration. Each understood something slightly but crucially different by the project of deconstruction they shared. We see these differences surface throughout the selections chosen in *For Strasbourg*: Lacoue-Labarthe’s more skeptical, more political and critical engagement with the Heideggerian legacy; Nancy’s investment in the project of “deconstructing Christianity” (whose full scope is only now beginning to emerge, mostly in Fordham books); and Derrida’s skepticism, even suspicion, of the implications of the other two “musketeers.” These differences emerge in a deliberately impromptu, as it were unscripted, form in the selections from *For Strasbourg*. Reading those conversations from 2004 now, in their 2014 translated and edited form, demands a rereading of the differences marked by those three philosophers. Reading the “now” of this particular reading after Helen means coming to terms with the interrelation between at least three profoundly different trajectories of deconstruction.

At the heart of the care for reading embodied by Helen’s work as editor, then, is a potentially far-reaching disagreement over reading itself and over the “responsibility” of reading (responsibility is a theme taken up in the Strasbourg conversations and addressed both in Miller’s *For Derrida* and in Sussman’s work). Having just proposed that philology might be another name for the care that defines Helen’s editorial genius, it may now be appropriate to note how Helen herself might have questioned that formulation to open it up to further debate. In her remarks on the naming of the MLI, Helen touches on

philology as she discusses her choice of the word *modern*. Extending further her remarks about the MLI, and working toward a rationale for the conference she helped organize to showcase MLI authors, these comments provide a glimpse of Helen's editorial vision, in practice and theory, and in her own words:

The Mellon program that funds the MLI is designated to finance books in underserved or emergent fields, and the name was chosen to align the initiative with the aims of the Modern Language Association, to help address the frequently voiced lament that in recent years publication opportunities for its members, especially junior scholars, have been drying up.

But then the term becomes historical: at the turn into the 20th century, the MLA was, I believe, distinguishing itself from classical philology. A methodological distinction (even if not the same one) was what I wanted to make: to emphasize interpretation and the creation of new knowledge through the unpacking of linguistic meaning and the specificities and materialities of language rather than description or mere competence. (2)

Resisting the return to "philology" I noted above, Helen here makes a "methodological distinction" that nicely articulates the principles on which the MLI was founded. At the same time, she opens up the debates for which the two-day conference was organized. Let me quote a few more lines from Helen's remarks:

But *modern* has a shadow: both a history of use as a value term and the fact that some people take it to mean some things that happened after about 1900. This I most emphatically did not want. Indeed, one draft of the grant proposal states that we could imagine an analysis of the *Gilgamesh*—so far as I know, the most ancient text in the history of civilization west of the Indus—that would be eligible for funding from the initiative. And one of the languages I definitely wanted the MLI to benefit was my own early love, Chinese, which in the mid-seventies, when I was studying it, didn't

count as a "modern language" for purposes of presentation at the MLA, despite the fact that it numbered more living speakers than any other language on earth.

The upshot of these ruminations was that I committed an act of language use: I proposed the name "Modern Language Initiative" to the Mellon and my colleagues in the consortium. And then I didn't think too much more about it, even had it worked into a logo. Until one day, at lunch with conference co-organizers Chris GoGwilt and Jacques Lezra, the bottom dropped out from under this slightly queasy, rather shopworn, and a bit boring term *modern*, revealing a whole scholarly debate about comparative modernisms, modernities, and what "modern" might amount to after all, one that I had no idea was going on. That moment of having the bottom fall out (and in the process discovering an involvement one didn't know one had) is, in a nutshell, what I think the study of language is about today. And for me, it was the origin of this conference. (2–3)

I excerpt these remarks to give a sense of Helen's own "involvement" in the shaping of debates about comparative literature (in this case, one might rather talk of an incitement or intervention, since Helen turned a small-scale May colloquium into a two-day conference involving two universities and six university presses).

Her comments highlight, too, an unfinished debate over the question of philology and reading with care. Alongside the "shadow" Helen sees over the word *modern* is a shadow over the term *philology*. Helen's distinction between "classical philology" and the "modern" languages (of the MLA) is clear, but it leaves in the shadow another philology, the comparative philology that is not only at the heart of the conference whose rationale she introduces and orchestrates but also, in many ways, a key element in the landscape of comparative literature and European theory she helped shape over the decades of her work at Stanford and Fordham.

Emerging from the list of books Helen brought to Fordham is (among other things) a question of philology: in what sense is philology the point of reference for the range of new interdisciplinary, comparative, and media studies to come? Recently published books, and books still to appear, may provide answers to that question, but Helen is no longer with us to continue this debate. Her editorial genius has left us, however, with volumes to debate, across all the disciplines. At least some degree of philology, surely, attaches to every discipline of reading. This may be the kind of care in reading that Helen's work requires us to think through. It is a care that should be brought to the legacy of books Helen produced over her years at Stanford and at Fordham, and of all those other books that bear the imprint of the debates Helen promoted. I would include my own argument about "postcolonial philology" in *The Passage of Literature* as something shaped by my conversations with Helen about the MLI. The underlying principles of an imperative to care that Helen brought to reading (its relation to the model of comparative literature, to the modern—and also to that other term from the 2012 conference, *medialities*) may become clear as we engage books that have just appeared or that have yet to appear from her editorial guidance: Hamacher's *Minima Philologica*, Barbara Cassin's *Sophistical Practice*, and the books in new series Helen helped bring to Fordham: *Idiom* and *Lit Z*. The full scope of Helen's editorial vision and its influence on the way we read now still need to be assessed. The underlying principles of that vision, however, may be seen in the work she sponsored at Stanford and Fordham and in such visionary initiatives as the MLI, combining critical theory, comparative literature, and interdisciplinary studies in an editorial practice of scholarly innovation.

All these principles are evident in the critical edition of Ernest Fenollosa and Ezra Pound's *The Chinese Written Character as a*

Medium for Poetry, edited by Haun Saussy, Jonathan Stalling, and Lucas Klein. As Andrew Parker discussed at the May colloquium, this book is comparative in an exemplary but surprising sense, since it is a reprint of one of the most notoriously problematic English-language studies of the Chinese language. Reframing Pound's editorial work on Ernest Fenollosa's essay, the book resituates Pound's influential intervention within the linguistic, cultural, and philosophical context of a cross-cultural moment all but invisible up to the book's publication—which is to say, all but invisible to readers of high modernism, critics from within Chinese-language studies, and a century of poets and other writers working under the shadow of Pound's argument about the Chinese character. It does so, moreover, with an editorial apparatus that makes visible the problems of translation discussed in Saussy's introduction. Those questions are themselves inseparable from the problem of the medium that had all along been a key feature of Fenollosa's essay and whose significance—for Pound, for Pound's readers, and for modernism more generally—is made newly visible, newly new, as it were, in the palimpsest of different versions of the essay and the juxtaposition of different scripts. As Parker so graphically pointed out, the book is an eloquent demonstration both of Helen's devotion to the traditional book form and of her interest in future media. Mourning the loss of Helen demands that we celebrate the work she promoted, work that still embodies an epoch of critical theory, an era of interdisciplinary renewal across the humanities and beyond, and the coming-of-age of multimedia comparative literary studies.

Helen's editorial vision, thoroughly committed to individual, original, and inventive readings, never promoted *one* version of reading. European theory, comparative literature, and interdisciplinarity—all the faces of the "humanities" (which, for Helen, included the sciences)—formed part of an ongoing de-

bate over what reading meant. As Timothy Campbell noted in prefacing his talk at the May colloquium, Helen’s sense of what a series list should look like was adaptable to the changing demands and needs and strengths of the books that emerged. In the words of her assistant, Fordham’s acquisitions editor, Tom Lay, “Nobody had less use for dogma.” Her commitment as an editor was to bring out the best in an author, in a collection, in a series—and in the list as a whole. If her work embodies an epoch, it is not because she was allied with a theoretical position, a school of thought, or a trend but because she was fiercely committed to critical inquiry in the broadest sense.

NOTES

- 1. The colloquium consisted of talks by Timothy Campbell, Jonathan Freedman, Jacques Lezra, Kevin McLaughlin, Neni Panourgiá, Andrew Parker, and Annika Thiem. Although not delivered at the May colloquium, Judith Butler’s remarks are included here because they show the link between the work of mourning Helen’s loss and the work of assessing her legacy. Butler presented versions of her tribute at the ACLA meeting on 22 March and at the Fordham memorial on 8 April.
- 2. Online tributes include Alan Liu’s, Haun Saussy’s, and Henry Sussman’s (“Helen Tartar”).
- 3. I borrow the term “European theory” from Kevin McLaughlin’s tribute to Helen at the colloquium.
- 4. For details of what led to Helen’s leaving Stanford, see Saussy’s online tribute.

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Helen, Angel of History

JUDITH BUTLER

HOW QUICKLY AND HOW OFTEN THOSE WHO HEARD ABOUT THE SUD-
DEN DEATH OF HELEN TARTAR ASKED, DID I LET HER KNOW HOW MUCH

her support meant to me? Did I express adequately my gratitude for all the work she did for me and for others in literature, philosophy, critical theory, visual culture, poetry, and religion, to name but a few of her fields? I do not think it was a reflex of self-punishment as much as the upsurge of another kind of remorse, the wishing to have said more. At the American Comparative Literature Association's memorial for Helen Tartar, person after person testified to the extraordinary support she offered—soliciting a manuscript; reading it actively and critically; sometimes productively quarreling with its ideas or formulations; finding the right readers; collaborating on the material form, including cover and font; and sending the work forth into the world of readers, “worlding” it, if you will. Some at that event spoke about the race against tenure and the acute anxiety it produces, and how crucial Helen was in expediting a review and presenting the work before the board for approval. Others talked about her frank and sensitive evaluations, which let us know what had to change before the manuscript became a book—always delivered with an affirmation of the project. But because Helen was a committed intellectual with her own philosophical, literary, and religious archive, she also contested conclusions and queried moves. I remember how, when she copyedited *The Psychic Life of Power* (in the days when she handled every aspect of production at Stanford), she quarreled with my reading of Freud and sent me to new sources to correct my view. To Haun Saussy, with whom she worked on several projects, she wrote, “When I read this argument, I felt I needed to take hold of it like a twisted sock and pull it inside-out.” She was our first reader, and we were incredibly lucky because she paid attention.

So it was not exactly guilt that seized us when we first experienced the shock of her death, when we said to ourselves, “It is not true,” or, rather, “It cannot be true, not in this world, the world we know, the one that supports us, the one that gives us ground,” and

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as we staggered out into a permanently altered landscape and said that with this loss “the world is now changed beyond recognition” or “the world is now unbearably and irreversibly impoverished” or “I am suddenly unsure where or how to stand,” as if we had not known that our capacity to stand had all along depended on some abiding support. It was something else, a wishing that we had said more, affirmed what she offered, in precise words addressed to her. Grief and apostrophe, indeed. We wanted more time for language with you; we wanted a time in which we could say what we tried to say, sometimes did say, and still wish to say. We wanted no less than the continuation of the scene of address that started “Dear Helen,” or the remarkable moment when she arrived with her ineffable alertness at the event, the conference, the bookstall, the café or restaurant, but perhaps also her yoga retreat or the corner of her office where those piles of manuscripts always waited. We had a life in language with her, and she supported it with constancy, devotion—sometimes a nearly mad devotion that had to be gently checked by those who cared for her—and yet a sense of affirmation renewed time and again even when the humanities were under attack or the predictions of their demise were sobering or demoralizing many of us.

We wanted her to know that we were thankful not only that she worked so hard and carefully; that she solicited manuscripts from scholars both well known and less well known; that she set up, with the Mellon Foundation (Phil Lewis, in particular), the Modern Language Initiative to facilitate the publication of first-time authors; that she gave her weekends over to her editing; and that she tolerated no errors in production—but also that she had an uncanny capacity to affirm the work of the humanities, the life of the mind as it acquired form in the language of the book, as the book was crafted, as it was sent out into the world of readers, as it was

read, and as it became a common object with its own presence in the world. At conferences we were the ones who muttered and fretted about the fate of the humanities, sometimes becoming pessimistic, jaded, sarcastic, and lost, noting that funding was being cut, that jobs were diminishing, that departments were arbitrarily closed or merged, that we were expected to convert the value of what we did into numbers that effaced the values they were meant to represent. And though Helen was wise about all this, she did not join in our pessimism: she was persistent, soliciting more manuscripts in new fields, setting up collaborations with other presses, making sure that books were marketable, even expanding the market, yet resisting the takeover by market values. And she continued to delight in the small successive acts that make a book, to delight in all the books she produced, and as she was working, she was also creating, and though so many of those hours were composed of solitary work, or work done alongside Bud, her husband, she was working for us and with us, and wherever she went there was a community of writers and readers. She gathered us, and gathers us still, and we only learn now how many of us there are.

Perhaps she was thanked enough, perhaps the whole lifework was something of a gift, however arduous it was at times. I think that she had a keen and mischievous sense of what she was offering and that she loved making the book and the event happen. Perhaps there were thanks already in the doing, which is not to say she did not have some thankless moments. She was always giving thanks for the chance to do this work, to wrestle with sentences (mine were particularly recalcitrant!), to expand and defend the fields of literary criticism and theory, philosophy, religion, poetry, and science, and to be our singular and most impassioned ally and collaborator. Of course, there were times when she was stressed, staying up too late, overdevoted to a large tome on religion, or racing against a production

deadline. But she would speak with happiness even about the books that seemed almost to break her; her tall frame would lengthen another inch, and she would break out into luminosity. Those eyes had a way of flashing. That happened—perhaps you saw this too—when she mentioned Bud. I am not sure I ever saw her utter his name without her eyes flashing—she would lengthen and illuminate, and it was unclear whether she illuminated the name or found herself suddenly within the realm of the luminous with that utterance.

Those luminous moments emerged time and again, in relation to ideas and books, friends, nature, and her meditative and spiritual life. I have a memory of her at Yale—it may have been in the late 1970s, when I was an undergraduate and she was taking her MA in English after one in East Asian studies, but maybe it was later, in the early 1980s, when she would return to Yale to search out manuscripts. Moving through the crowd at an event, she would tower over most of us—but what I remember best was the intensity of her attention. It could seem like consternation. Only later, when I met her formally at Stanford in the early 1990s, did I see how the intensity was interrupted by bursts of unbridled laughter, like the pacing of a wild joy. Her laughter was always smart, turning on a pun or a reversal or an unexpected connection. She saw the foolishness of those in power but struggled to remain affirmative.

Her exit from Stanford University Press was traumatic. Let us state that clearly. Something happened there that she could not believe could happen, and she would suffer from it for years. I am not sure what horrible euphemisms Stanford used when those in charge decided to eliminate her position and to restrict the humanities list. Alan Liu puts it this way in the acknowledgments in his book *The Laws of Cool* (2004):

It is with a piercing sense of pain and irony that I am forced in my acknowledgment of

Helen also to acknowledge the power of the postindustrial forces that are major themes in my book about the fate of the humanities in the age of knowledge work. Thanks to Helen for her courage, loyalty, rigor, and ferocious intellectual curiosity. I remember a crackling fireplace we sat by when she visited me in Bethany, Connecticut, during a blackout caused by an ice storm. In the morning the trees were covered in a brilliant sheen of ice—every twig and leaf. Fire and ice: these stay with me as emblems of the clarity of Helen's editorial vision. (ix–x)

When Helen departed from Stanford, many of her authors left as well. And even as we migrated to the lesser-known Fordham University Press, many of us—John Caputo and Daniel Boyarin, to name two—also worried about the fate of critical work in the humanities, and whether our friend would be all right. We could not have imagined how formidable a list of publications Helen would build at Fordham. Though the trauma of Stanford stayed with her for a long time, she became increasingly absorbed by the joy of working at Fordham, becoming part of the university's community, expanding the press's list, recruiting young scholars. Even though once a victim of austerity cuts that differentially affect the humanities, Helen managed to avert the cynicism and despair that seize so many of us. She kept finding delight in what she read and helped to produce, and in producing, she proved the skeptics wrong. In an interview she remarked, "Of course one of the nice things about being an editor is that you're a perpetual student. I'm also looking forward to renewing a profound intellectual joy I had—that sense of bringing truly exciting books into the world, things that will keep people thinking for decades" (Stellabotte). Asked where she thought publishing was going, she responded, "[I]f you meet someone who says she does know, don't trust her—she is probably either trying to sell you something or under the sway of someone who's trying to sell her something." She continued:

In a very mundane and specific way, I do something every day to contribute to where publishing is going. As an acquiring editor at a small university press, I orchestrate decisions about what gets published at the publishing house where I am employed, and I do what I can to help influence how those books are offered to the public. Because those decisions are sometimes tough and painful, it's very important for me to remember that I do not know where publishing is going—that in fact I have to learn this from the people who come to me seeking to get published. Because the future of publishing lies in the books that people write.

And then she said something that might be helpful for us to remember since it is about time and the unknowable, about what could not have been known and is still hard to apprehend:

One can, of course, know only two things about the future: first, that one cannot know with certainty what it will be; and second, that one cannot help wanting to do so. In China, writing was born entwined with the hope of divining the future, through the cracks in turtle shells. At our late date, we tend to think of writing as the source of history—despite Plato's early warning that it is memory's foe. But maybe part of the disquiet behind the question "Where is publishing going?" reflects some unsettled temporality latent in writing itself. (Tartar)

Temporality is now unsettled by the words she has left us, especially because they are her words, and they are ours, a form of shared world making that marked her editorial engagements. It would be impossible to list all that she loved about the books she helped to make. She adored Jonathan Goldberg's books on the Renaissance not only for what they had to say but also for the very materiality of those books, their graphic form, the feel of the cover, the look of the font. She had strong, nearly backbreaking loyalty to the several works on religion she published with Hent de Vries. She greatly admired the first-time authors—the dozens of them—that she

worked with painstakingly, and the translations from French and from Chinese were labors of love. She could point to the concepts she loved in the work of Jean-Luc Marion and Jean-Luc Nancy—especially Nancy's work on the senses. She was surrounded by feminist theorists and philosophers and crafted lasting friendships with many of them—including Annika Thiem, Kyoo Lee, Miglena Nikolchina, and Niza Yanay. She sought to make it impossible for the academic world to forget or turn aside from work that cared about language, passions in and for language, ethical relationality, alterity, religion, metaphor, the ideality of the concept, material figures, joyful yet knowing criticism in dark times. It was in recent years as if there could be no better argument for the humanities than a fine book and no struggle that would match the slow and careful crafting of that object.

Sometimes I worried that Helen was dangerously overworked, but then I remembered that she had found meditation practices to help her settle, breathe more easily, and move without obstruction, that she would knit, methodically and patiently crafting something beautiful, a beauty that one can actually be wrapped in. She learned how to establish rhythms of self-care and committed herself to an unwavering ethics of nondestructiveness. Drucilla Cornell tells of finding Helen in a kitchen separating a cat from a mouse, holding each in a separate hand, explaining to them the importance of preserving the life of the Other. One fall morning in Cambridge about a decade ago I met Helen for breakfast, and suddenly she started crying because, as she put it, one day global warming would wipe out the seasons, and we would no longer see the bright colors of the leaves. There were beauties she could not live without and violations she could not live with, and she found ways to compose herself as she helped to compose our books. Meticulous composing was, for her, an affirmative ethical practice. She believed that we should treat each other with

extraordinary care, and that true care required intense attention and memory. She received the manuscript as something entrusted to her, and this attention forestalled the ever-present possibility of error, even harm. Still, I worried about the mounting piles of manuscripts on her desk. Did she have a system? At Stanford she seemed to handle everything on her own. Was she not overwhelmed by all those who wanted to work with her, having heard how fine that accompaniment could be? Yet somehow she managed to sort it out impeccably. The last message I received from her was sent just a few weeks before her death:

Judith, I'm in an extraction frenzy, due to be blown out of the office backward tomorrow evening, like the Angel of History looking in horror at the debris behind her. What about lunch the week of March 10, the day I return? I can look for [the manuscript we discussed] then, and I hope it's in two of the piles (submissions) that will be rising most demandingly before my agonized, backward-drawn eyes. (This all tongue-in-cheek—I'm taking a couple of days vacation in Boulder en route to a conference in Denver, in the hope of intensive taiji practice with two wonderful people I was with in August.)

Taiji is sometimes translated as "grand extreme"—a practice that depends on the cultivation of hardness from softness; it understands slowness and softness as resources for self-making. Helen, so susceptible to pain, was composing and strengthening, differentiating attentive strength from destruction, and pursuing an ethical life, in which a careful attention to self, other, and world was imperative. And yet she was killed by someone driving toward her car who was not paying attention, who was not careful enough. It is

a bitter and unbearable irony, but it reminds us of what she knew—namely, that small and immediate acts of care are necessary to sustain what is most valuable.

I am left with a Helen figuring herself as the Angel of History wide-eyed before a mounting destruction, an angel who went on vacation, who stopped the procession of manuscripts periodically for her meditation: breathing, sitting, lengthening that formidable spine, taking care of herself when she wasn't taking care of us, so that she could take care of what we made—humans and objects both as cultivated beings—and so that she could be on the side of repairing the world, staving off destruction. Blown out of the office backward—the phrase prospectively carries the violence that would end her life and the radically unsettled temporality in which we are left to live. And yet there she went, making a good Benjaminian joke as she flew off to the conference and to meditate (the "grand extreme" might be a figure that embraces the pace and rhythm of that life). She was making an appointment she would not be able to keep, a vulnerable and fierce angel on the run, enjoying language and surely also, in that sudden, staccato, and contagious way, laughing.

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Helen's Gifts

TIMOTHY CAMPBELL

I'M STRUGGLING NOW, TRYING TO WRITE, TO SAY ANYTHING, TO FOLLOW THE COMMAND "WRITE IT!" WHAT I REALLY NEED IS AN E-MAIL from Helen, telling me to sit down, to say what it is that I want to say and then to go about saying it. She would probably give me an ideogram, direct me to a page of Ernest Fennollosa's *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry*, then add how much she was looking forward to seeing the essay in print, on real paper, out there in the world. She would also, perhaps by way of closing, remind me that writing was a practice of making oneself vulnerable, and that wisdom wasn't going to come uninvited if you didn't let go of the need for some security.

Here goes.

I met Helen Tartar late. Of course I had heard of her—who hadn't?—and had seen her from afar at the MLA conventions. But I could never find the courage to speak to her. Here, I thought, was someone who had single-handedly brought to American shores the writers who changed the way I think and live. You know the names, the books, and the mind-blowing series with great titles like *Crossing Aesthetics and Writing Science*. Helen epitomized what I thought an editor should be: thoughtful, a terrific listener, and tough as nails. It was the tough-as-nails part that frightened me. That was unfortunate, since I missed a chance to get to know her sooner.

Fortunately, five years ago, after another wave of writers and thinkers, mostly from Italy, carried me to Fordham and to Helen, we began collaborating—first, not surprisingly given Helen's commitment to translation, bringing together works from the likes of Jean-Luc Nancy, Roberto Esposito, and Étienne Balibar. We followed that up more formally in creating the series *Commonalities*, a name she proposed after too many misses on my part. Our work together, cut short by her untimely death on 3 March 2014, remains one of the best experiences of my academic life; a gift not just to me but to all those who like their theory straight up, intimate, elegantly written, and clear.

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Can I write honestly about Helen? To do so means to speak directly about the doubts we all face in what often feels like the cramped world of academia. It means acknowledging how adept Helen was in recognizing the importance of opening spaces of generosity, exchange, and, horror of horrors, the spirit. Helen did all of these, but it's especially now, eight months after her death, that this side of her work and person comes into focus. Indeed I never met a more religious person in my life, if by *religion* we mean an ethical practice that is not organized around belief. My impression was always that Helen was fulfilling her life's vocation: nothing short of shepherding authors to their books, which, as she would often remind us, were also hers because they appeared on her list. As any look at her various lists will show and as Jacques Lezra beautifully observes in these pages, Helen crisscrossed boundaries and disciplines in ways that many of us found intoxicating. She would speak one moment of tai chi and in the next wonder about the differences between Derrida's and Esposito's readings of immunity, about Buddhism and loving-kindness; and in the next breath work out a connection to something she had mentioned to Bud, her husband, the previous day after reading a submission on Christ's body. Helen was fearless in a way that made you unafraid and confident. Little was off-limits to Helen, and so when Tom Lay, her longtime assistant at Fordham, wrote in the aftermath of her death about the abiding skepticism and wide intelligence that characterized her life and work, I could only nod. She practiced a form of Derrida's "white mythology" as a response to forms of violence, both mythic and otherwise.¹ Everything and everyone touch, but not just in some murky thought of interdependence. Helen lived as she thought, as she practiced. With passion, enormous energy, and subtlety—and with love.

Helen often mentioned how important Derrida's *The Gift of Death* was to her, long

after she had read it, especially the first chapter. Our conversation on it was just beginning when she died. Of the many passages that I'm sure lingered for her and now linger for me, there is this: "How does one give oneself death in that other sense in terms of which *se donner la mort* is also to interpret death, to give oneself a representation of it, a figure, a signification or destination for it? How does one give it to oneself in the sense of simply, and more generally, relating to the possibility of death (on the basis of what care, concern, or apprehension)?" (10).

As a way of representing and caring for that gift, I want to close with a poem from Rūmī (another destination):

Through the Low Gate

Moses put a low gate in the Jerusalem wall,
so that even unconsciously
everyone would have to put down his pack
and lower his head, bowing at least that much,
as though to say,

I pray that I can put down what I carry.

.....

The gate was called *Babi-Saghir*,
the little door.

Consider the world-power you acknowledge
as a small gate you must go through
to pay homage to a dunghill,
and instead of doing that, recognize the holy
ones,
who are sweet as sugarcane.

Don't grovel in front of political leaders.
Not your *highness*, say your *lowness*
to those empty weed-stems. Honor the sun we
see by.

Don't play a cat-and-mouse game.
Join the lion and swift deer in their hunt for
soul.

Let pot-lickers follow the big basin-licker.
I could continue and make some rulers and
administrators
very angry. They know who I'm talking about.

(281)

All of us have stories to tell of Helen’s enormous generosity; of her helping us write first, middle, and last books; of her making us feel that we were the center of her attention (and we were). She also reminded us when we were paying homage to dunghills, always remembering to offer kind words that eased the pain of moving in often small worlds.

Helen was as sweet as sugarcane. Her wisdom and kindness are gifts that remain with those of us lucky enough to have known her.

NOTE

1. “And when we try to determine the dominant metaphor of a group which interests us because of its capacity to gather things together, then what else should we expect but the metaphor of domination augmented by that power of dissimulation which allows it to escape domination in its turn, what else but God or the Sun” (Derrida, “White Mythology” 64).

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theories and
methodologies

Helen Tartar and the Culture of Bookishness, 1951–2014

JONATHAN FREEDMAN

WHAT ARE WE MOURNING WHEN WE MOURN HELEN TARTAR'S LOSS? WE ARE RESPONDING, FIRST AND FOREMOST, TO THE LOSS OF A FRIEND, A

collaborator, a companion in crime. Like so many, I owe my career to Helen. She plucked me out of a professional abyss at a crucial pre-promotion moment, got a stalled manuscript accepted, into production, and out into the world in an unheard-of nine months. Along the way she sent me countless messages of support testifying (I can now see) to her savvy and ingenuity but phrased in a way that made me think it was merely my due. Heady stuff for an oppressed-feeling assistant professor at an Ivy League school coming up for promotion to associate professor, and inspiring enough in all the right ways to catalyze not just that promotion but a continuing sense that someone—somewhere—would respond to my work and push me in the right directions. More than an editor, Helen was the reader I—we all—yearn for: responsive, generous, exacting.

So we mourn the loss of Helen the editor and Helen the ideal reader. We mourn as well her idiosyncrasies, so precious in the homogenizing world of the corporatizing academy: the wide eyes; the serious playfulness of her demeanor; the knitting, always the knitting—the last time I saw her, at a conference at the University of North Carolina, she was sitting in the back row, needles quietly working, like a benign Madame Defarge, clearly not missing any of the words that were sailing over my own jet-lagged head. All this vivid life is suddenly, incomprehensibly gone, reduced to nothing by a single, careless driver swerving out of his lane on a cloudless Colorado day.

In mourning for Helen, then, we confront incomprehensible death: a life cruelly cut short, and the stupid indifference of a world where such things happen. But we are, I think, not only mourning Helen the person or even Helen the reader-editor; we're also mourning the formation of which she was an exponent and exemplar.

What Helen believed in above all was the book in the broadest sense: the physical object, to be sure, but also the culture in which

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it was embedded, the work it did there. As far as the “art of the book” is concerned, I’ve never encountered an editor more painstaking at every step of the process; when I worked with her, Helen chose the typeface, fussed over margin size, made sure I had a fine copyeditor, encouraged me to add illustrations, got them reproduced with the greatest fidelity possible in 1991, even designed the inner covers with Morris-wallpaper patterns. But books, of course, are more than physical objects. Radiating out from these objects is a network of associations and identifications that institute a regime of value I have called elsewhere bookishness, to use a broad term whose connotations have swung from mildly negative to largely positive as the cultural role of the book has moved from center to margin.¹ The book has come to be identified with attributes that, given a positive or a negative spin, define the essence of the humanistic enterprise: interiority, free play of the mind, heightened consciousness of the world validated and instantiated in the act of reading.

These associations go so deep that it’s almost impossible to disentangle them from our thinking about books; they’re hallowed in academic and extra-academic discourse alike. To cite but one example: in a spirited defense of reading, Annie Murphy Paul cites Frank Kermode’s argument that to read, or at least to read deeply, is to engage in spiritual rather than carnal interpretation. She goes on to discuss neuroscientists who have investigated the phenomenology of reading and concluded that what they call deep reading—“slow, immersive, rich in sensory detail and emotional and moral complexity”—is tied to changes in brain structure. Paul reminds us that Maryanne Wolf’s book *Proust and the Squid* offers a lay reader (like me) a powerful account of how reading reprograms the brain, and how the brain processes the words in a book differently from the words one encounters elsewhere—say, on the computer screen—let alone images, which communicate to entirely

different portions of the brain. Reading, specifically reading books, is thus linked to a whole set of interpretive and mental operations, which take on a moral cast. For many critics engaged in the defense of reading, at stake is nothing less than the ability, through the book, to experience a world as perceived by others and hence to perceive and to value others themselves. Paul tells us:

Raymond Mar, a psychologist at York University in Canada, and Keith Oatley, a professor emeritus of cognitive psychology at the University of Toronto, reported . . . that individuals who often read fiction appear to be better able to understand other people, empathize with them and view the world from their perspective. This link persisted even after the researchers factored in the possibility that more empathetic individuals might choose to read more novels. A 2010 study by Mar found a similar result in young children: the more stories they had read to them, the keener their “theory of mind,” or mental model of other people’s intentions.

Although we may have questioned the specifics, we academics have been literally invested in this vision of bookishness: not only in English and comparative literature but also in philosophy—at least one form of philosophy. In all these, no matter how contested, the constellation of values that flows out from the bookish dispensation flows into the heart of the discipline’s self-understanding, whether underwriting its intellectual project or guaranteeing its social value—even “surface reading” and “big data” approaches that seem to be entering many of these disciplines depend on the cultural valorization of the book that their more polemical statements often contest. It’s no coincidence that as an editor Helen made major contributions to each of these disciplines—finding promising younger scholars and encouraging them, pushing established ones, allowing all of us to publish the kind of work that other presses were less

eager to print, keeping the enterprise going in the most material of ways, by aiding careers, as well as in the most ideal ones, by bringing struggling new ideas to life.

Helen's commitment to the book, in short, extended into a commitment to bookishness—to the cultures and forms of thought nourished by the book, radiating out from it, returning to it as a kind of totem or even (in a nonpejorative sense) a fetish. When we mourn Helen, we also mourn what seems like the passing of this bookishness, which we had come to take so much for granted as the foundation of our lives as critics, scholars, teachers, and intellectuals that we were able to question, controvert, and problematize its assumptions without fearing its loss. Because we knew that there were libraries, publishers, bookstores (new and used), and good, well-paying jobs in academic departments, we enjoyed the greatest freedom, that of celebrating the end of the conditions that made our work possible. We could remark, with Nietzsche, on the death of philosophy; with Derrida, on the end of the book and the beginning of writing; with Foucault, on the death of the author—without facing the possibility that all these deaths might actually occur. But in slow motion, and sometimes fast-forward, they seem to be happening before our very eyes.

The interrelated factors causing this fiasco are no doubt familiar to the reader of these pages, but they are worth enumerating, if only to give us a sense of how much we have to mourn. The withdrawal of money from public universities by cash-starved states (or cash-starving states, like my own, that hand out huge tax breaks and cut education funding) and the corporatization of private as well as public universities have added to the dicey hiring prospects to create the sense that the kinds of careers that were open to me when Helen saved mine are not going to be available to my best undergraduates and graduate students. Augmenting the problem, undergraduate students are slowly moving away

from the traditional humanistic disciplines. At my own university, the only one about which I can speak with authority, we're seeing a gradual seepage of students away from the English major (at its peak, when I came here, one thousand students strong, now about five hundred) and from other humanities departments into places like the business school. Even the courses I teach in film, perennial crowd-pleasers, have seen shrinking enrollments. Colleagues at other universities report similar losses.

Things are equally problematic on the broader cultural front. Small bookstores have been slammed by the superstores like the late and largely unlamented Borders (once a fine bookstore here in Ann Arbor, then an independent-bookstore-destroying national chain) and the almost-as-bad Barnes and Noble; now they're being hit by *Amazon*, which is also threatening to take a bite out of the few book publishers left. University presses are on increasingly tenuous ground, as longtime editors like Helen are being let go or just not replaced (I am happy that Fordham University Press is not following this route) while the presses begin to court the middlebrow public that the publishing industry has abandoned. The basic problem here, as throughout the university, is the demand that an inherently unprofitable enterprise like a university press be made fully responsive to the bottom line—an absurd demand when you consider that only twenty-seven university athletic departments in the NCAA make money, and of these only seven receive no subsidy from their university ("NCAA Finances"). Given their spectacular failure to retain students, massive open online courses (MOOCs) may have receded as a threat to our profession, despite the rhetoric of commentators like the gullible *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman. But it's pretty clear that budget-conscious administrators see online and distance learning as a cheap way of delivering basic instruction to the students who once

crowded introductory courses at large state universities and provided work for graduate students and professors alike. And in perhaps the worst possible news, many defenses of the humanities appearing in the popular press advocate their worth with an ingenuousness and a fervor that makes one wonder whether the humanities so construed are even worth preserving, since they seem almost utterly detached from irony, wit, and the larger culture.

These conditions form the backdrop of our mourning for a figure like Helen. We are coming to terms not only with a personal loss but with the loss of a cultural formation, a way of being. We perform an analogous, lesser but still palpable, mourning, or at least I do, every time we pass the site of a bookstore (like the beloved Shaman Drum here in Ann Arbor) transformed into a burger joint or talk a promising undergraduate out of going to graduate school, as I just had to do before writing these words. Something about these conditions diminishes us; Helen's untimely and absurd death provides (to use an old-fashioned term whose provenance seems oddly appropriate) an objective correlative of that loss.

But that being said, mourning, if done right, doesn't have to linger in melancholia. We might also be in a position to work through our sense of individual and collective diminishment by invoking Helen's distinctive sense of intellectual adventuresomeness, and to think about a moment that seems to be dark as one of potential renewal and transformation. This is true of the book and of bookishness alike. To be sure, fewer books may be sold in the age of Kindle and the e-book (the jury's still out); but one unexpected development is that university presses are using *Amazon* and selling e-books on their own Web sites to reach niche audiences beyond the bookstores that, even in their salad days, didn't always stock their works with enthusiasm. (Whether this helps them make more money is another story.) While as a somewhat

grumpily old-fashioned person I'm totally committed to the book as book, I recognize that there are all kinds of things I can do with different forms of publication: I can embed film clips in my writing, for example, rather than rely on grainy stills reproduced on paper; when I write about a work of art, I can reproduce it in glorious color that will glow on the iPad screen rather than print it in feeble black and white. Andrew Parker, in his presentation at the Fordham colloquium, suggests ways of publishing Pound's *Cantos* online that point to congruent possibilities. I am sure that more possibilities will emerge as we move into the digital future.

More possibilities have opened up within the culture of bookishness as well. Although I shudder whenever I see someone reading on an electronic device, I have to recognize that more people are reading more words than ever before and that as a scholar, however much I skim and skip when reading online, I have more primary and secondary sources at my fingertips than I ever did before. Now that Borders has imploded and Barnes and Noble is closing stores right and left, smallish bookstores are making a go of it again. MOOCs have not in any way replaced the traditional classroom—for some reason, people want to be taught by teachers, not lectured at by disembodied images on a computer screen—but have nonetheless done great work in building public interest in literature; I'm thinking here of the popular online poetry courses taught by Margaret Soltan and Elissa Neu. The professoriat seems, finally, to have woken up to the dangers posed to us all by adjunctification, at least judging from the unionization effort at the University of Illinois, Chicago, which united tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty members in a common cause that is all too rare but augurs well for the future. Even my laments about students have to be qualified. It's true that they're taking fewer traditional English, comparative literature, and philosophy classes; but the largest

growing major on our campus is not business but environmental studies, with which one can hardly quarrel, and which opens the door for interdisciplinary collaborations that vitalize our work and lead to new teaching opportunities for our colleagues, graduate students, and peers. And while, sadly, fewer students majoring in English and American studies may be taking my film courses, they're flocking to my colleague's new course in digital humanities, which I will be happy about as soon as I can figure out what they are.

The culture of bookishness, in other words, may prove more tenacious than we think; the academic institutions, including beleaguered university presses and graduate programs, more durable. Yet both are tenuous. As Richard Hofstadter argued more than fifty years ago, the United States has traditionally been a profoundly anti-intellectual culture, with a bias toward the practical and commonsensical, and so the inwardness, contemplativeness, and moral generosity we associate with the book are always going to be marginal here. The postwar boom that fed our academic institutionalization of the culture of bookishness was less a permanent revolution than a historical anomaly; and the second boom, or boomlet, from which I profited in the 1980s and early 1990s, a secondary wave. But ours is a dynamic culture, and while the academy (appropriately) lags behind, both remain open to the kinds of experimentation that enhance a public

and pedagogic engagement with books and bookishness. Embracing these experimental efforts and attempting to negotiate between the new (Kardashian studies, anyone?) and the set way of doing things may well be the best tribute we can offer to the memory of Helen Tartar, who showed nothing but faith in a terrified assistant professor twenty-five years ago, and who showed nothing but steely optimism as she knit her way through the ups and downs of her own career. It is surely the best—the only—way we have of thriving in the dark times we fear are descending on us.

NOTE

1. I adopted the term *bookishness* from Alison Mackeen. It became the title of a symposium I organized in 2009 at the University of Michigan, later published (with other contributions) as a special issue of the *Michigan Quarterly Review* (Freedman).

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Helen’s List

JACQUES LEZRA

THE BATTLE IS NOT YET JOINED, AND THE POET HAS LISTED FOR US THE ARRAY OF WARRIORS, OF SHIPS, OF FORCES. “TELL ME NOW,” THE POET OF *The Iliad* has sung, in Richmond Lattimore’s translation, “you Muses who have your homes on Olympos. / For you, who are goddesses, are there, and you know all things, / and we have heard only the rumor of it and know nothing. / Who then of those were the chief men and the lords of the Danaäns?” (2.484–88). Then the catalog: the list. In the Homeric tradition, a catalog unrolls under the guarding eye of the Muses, the witnesses, under the keeping and inspiring eye of divine and distant figures who have seen the scene, whose witnessing we imagine, from whom we borrow the faint authority we wear when we begin our own songs. These Homeric lists seem to us scattershot today—this ship here, that one there, a warrior next to another warrior simply on the grounds that, yes, there he stands. And yet to the extent that they turn on the authority of the fact, of a divine witness who reports this disorder and from whom we take the rumors of the fact, Homer’s lists are at core structured, signed, legitimated. *The Iliad* is not only the story of the encounter between Trojans and Achaeans; it is also the story of the encounter between two phenomenologies—one envisioning orders of events, names on a list, as they present themselves to us, rumored, accidentally, contingently; another envisioning the order of what presents itself according to the signature of the presiding Muse, according to an immanent principle of structure derivable, if at all, from the totality of the list. These two encounters and these two phenomenologies don’t line up; they’re fought on different fields and at different levels; they have different scopes. One phenomenology is in principle endless—there’s always another matter at hand; we cannot foreclose the possibility that another ship will appear; and the chaos of the battle always means that another figure, foe or friend, may step before us when we least expect it. The other is always bounded, limited on both sides by the immanent unfolding of its principle: that this or that friend or foe should have appeared makes manifest, *sub specie aeternitatis*, the reason for his, or her, appearing.

JACQUES LEZRA is professor of comparative and Spanish literature at New York University. His most recent book is *Wild Materialism: The Ethic of Terror and the Modern Republic* (Fordham UP, 2010). With Emily Apter and Michael Wood, he is an editor of *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon* (Princeton UP, 2014), the English translation of *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies*.

How do we read, today, the encounter between these two orders of encounter, the thematic order on which Achaeans and Trojans meet, and the structural order on which *The Iliad*'s two phenomenologies meet?

This is my analogy, my little conceit. Reading now, after Helen Tartar, means thinking about Helen's list as a list or as a catalog: it means, to echo and pervert the title of Peter Brooks's *Reading for the Plot*, reading for the list. Reading for the list means taking account of the astonishing catalog of books, thoughts, scholarly adventures, accidents of circumstance, great victories, occasional setbacks—some great, some small—that Helen Tartar set before us, over the span of her glorious career. Reading for the list means trying to read from the perspective of the signature that gives its hidden, immanent, witnessing structure to Helen's list. Reading for the list means reading her list and reading other works through her list—that is, reading with the conceptual tools that her authors developed over the years, with her help and under her guidance. We'd be reading, say, *The Iliad* with and through Judith Butler's work, or with and through the work of the critics on today's panel. Reading for the list, we would now ask ourselves to account for the additional mediation that makes our reading happen: not just *The Iliad* in dialogue with another critic's work, a three-part story, ourselves, Homer, and a third whose work, from Helen's list, we trust to help in our encounter with Trojans and Achaeans. Not just three parts but four—indeed a network, three works or names or little ships and a fourth that walks always by their side, Helen's signature in the critical work we read. And Helen's signature brings in a fifth signature and many more, as well as other works from Helen's list and contiguous works and names and little ships and great warriors brought into contact with one another by her signature.

In principle we could, and should, follow this procedure of reading for the list broadly:

if we read in this way, if we accept that reading for the list is a methodological procedure opened for us in part by Helen's list, we'll be asking ourselves to read criticism and literature, whether it is published by Stanford or Fordham, by a university press or by a trade press, as if it were indeed part of a catalog, a list. We'll ask after the catalog of signatures and names that accompany the works we read; we'll ask after the contingencies that range this name and this thought by that one, and after the ghostly signatures of the editor in the work. A rhizomatic, networked form of mediation is the outcome; reading for the list opens the experience of reading to the accidents of contiguity and of circumstance, to the determining work of the market on our reading, to the subtly definitive work of the editor in creating the reading-experience horizon, and of the editor's list in creating the worlds of our reading experience. When we read for the list in this sense, we read works across catalogs and in their listed shape. We find ourselves, and we lose ourselves, in this forest of lists.

As for me, I've twice found myself on Helen's list—my first book, *Unspeakable Subjects* (1997), from Stanford, and a recent one, *Wild Materialism* (2010), from Fordham. We had talked about two more books she'd see through, like little ships we projected floating toward port—one, to follow *Wild Materialism*, was to be the second of a trilogy; the other a collection of essays on subject effects. Helen and I had talked about these books for her list in the desultory, careless way one talks about things when one has all the time in the world—when the catalog of hours and days spreads forth, its end unthought, its principle of structure unimagined, untallied.

If in reading for the list, for Helen's list, we ask after her signature, we're asking, What did she see on the field before her? What did her keen eye diagnose about the chaotic scene, battle as well as idyll, about that messy landscape where armies and actors, ignorant of their strengths or allegiances or goals or weapons,

a grand chaos of ships tossed in disciplinary bathtubs and inland seas, came and clashed? What she saw, and what she brought into her list, made sense, for a moment, for Helen: the figures ranged themselves with her and for her into a list. What is her signature, then?

Let me turn for a kind of answer to one of Helen's last books, Barbara Cassin's *Sophistic Practice: Toward a Consistent Relativism*, which I had the privilege of recommending to Helen and then of reading for the press at different moments. Cassin's book collects among many other luminous essays a brief chapter on Mephistopheles's line, from Goethe's *Faust*, "Du siehst, mit diesem Trank im Leibe, / Bald Helenen in jedem Weibe" 'As soon as that drink is in you, you will see / Helen in every woman' (1.2604; my trans.).

Seeing Helen in every woman. Cassin asks, "[H]ow has Helen been constructed since Homer, such that she is seen in every woman? In gathering together her textual world, one notices a red thread: in a rather striking manner, her reality, her consistency, are entirely linked to language in all its forms" (59). This then is one answer, from Helen's list, about how we should read her textual world, the world of texts she gathered about her and into which she knit her red thread. When we read for Helen's list, we acknowledge that our Helen is linked to language and links us to language, in all its forms: reading closely, with attention to language; writing clearly about reading closely; thinking through our relation to language, through our being in language. In this sense, then, Helen's list remains open—her textual world outlasts her, and new works knit themselves into that list with her red thread even after she is gone, in ways she couldn't have foreseen; almost accidentally, works find their way into contiguity with others in the rumorous clamor of Helen's absence. No principle we can know watches over this knitting of works past, present, and to come. If it is a sort of mediation we envision when we read in

this way for the list, the mediation is at odds with any sense of completeness: a third walks at our side, a fourth, others we do not know but whose works inform what we are reading and how we read, yet more to come, from the backlist and from its sequels, linked to language in all its forms: but who is to say what forms language will take, has taken, is taking?

There is another way, too, of reading for Helen's list. What else do we mean when we say that language in all its forms runs like a red thread through Helen's list? We mean that this was what Helen attended to, that this was Helen's care in building her list and in leaving it open for us; but we mean something else as well. Here the language of phenomenology seems less wanting to me. Let me give you an example. It's the old story. A group of leaders, older men, warriors once, gossiping and murmuring: a hum of resentment. "Those who sat with Priam" on the battlements of Troy, as Helen approached the group, intrepid, wrapped in shining garments, were no longer fighters, "yet they were excellent / speakers still, and clear, as cicadas who through the forest / settle on trees, to issue their delicate voice of singing" (3.146–52). From where they sit they command the field, these elders, buzzing and singing; they see stretched before them the armies of Troy and Greece; their song is hidden inside the poet's song like a pastoral rumor, resentful, full of blame for Helen, full of fear for the warriors below, for the costs of war, for their safety. Priam alone does not blame Helen and asks her instead to tell him—since his eyesight fails him—who the figures below the walls are. She knows: they are her kin, her countrymen. Helen's list here is not, in the expected sense, an epic catalog: it's too short, and the principle of organization is neither accidental nor immanent to Helen herself. The old man says to her, "Could you tell me the name of this man who is so tremendous; / who is this Achaian man of power and stature?" (166–67). And Helen, "the shining among women" (171),

answers, "This now will I tell you in answer to the question . . . : / That man is Atreus's son Agamemnon" (177–78); "[n]ext again the old man ask[s] her, seeing Odysseus, / 'Tell me of this one also, dear child'" (191–92); and after she answers him, he asks, "Who then is this other Achaian of power and stature / towering over the Argives by head and broad shoulders?" (226–27). "Aias," she answers (229). It is Aias who stands there, above his fellows.

An expanded catalog, a short list. Helen's list here is something mysteriously different from the lists we hear elsewhere in Homer's great poem—the catalogs of ships and names bearing the rumored trace of the Muse's witnessing, catalogs held together by a signature or open catalogs of experiences that present themselves pell-mell to our sight, the two phenomenologies of the poem. Here Helen is listing and describing fearlessly, against the buzzing murmurs of the tribe's elders; but she is also gathering for Priam a world that he can no longer see. Helen lists; she sees them "all now, all the rest of the glancing-eyed Achaians, / all whom I would know well by sight, whose names I could tell you" (234–35). "[Y]et nowhere," says Helen, nowhere does

she see, but still she lists their names for us, "those two . . . Kastor, breaker of horses, and the strong boxer, Polydeukes, / my own brothers, born with me of a single mother" (236–38). "So she spoke," so Helen spoke, caring for her living countrymen, for the dead, for family and foe and blind Priam in listing her list, "but the teeming earth lay already upon them, / away in Lakedaimon, the beloved land of their fathers" (243–44). Reading for the list: reading for the traces of Helen's care.

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Forum

PMLA invites members of the association to submit letters that comment on articles in previous issues or on matters of general scholarly or critical interest. The editor reserves the right to reject or edit Forum contributions and offers the PMLA authors discussed in published letters an opportunity to reply. Submissions of more than one thousand words are not considered. The journal omits titles before persons' names and discourages endnotes and works-cited lists in the Forum. Letters should be e-mailed to pmlaforum@mla.org or be printed double-spaced and mailed to PMLA Forum, Modern Language Association, 26 Broadway, 3rd floor, New York, NY 10004-1789.

Aspiring to True Multilingualism

TO THE EDITOR:

Paul Kei Matsuda offers useful observations about language differences, code-switching, and translingual writing in “The Lure of Translingual Writing” (129.3 [2014]: 478–83). The combining of codes and languages has a lengthy history: notable twentieth-century examples include poetry by Jorge Guillén, who links “death” and “vejez” (“old age”), as well as “Jesús” and “orange juice,” in bilingual rhymes; the poem “Chicano Teching,” by Phil Goldvarg; and “Jack y el güagüero” (“Jack and the Bus Driver”), a short story Edmundo Desnoes appended to his novel *Memorias del subdesarrollo* (*Memories of Underdevelopment*). As an academic who has presented multilingual papers and as an author of bilingual fiction, I find these issues fascinating. Like Matsuda, however, I worry about potential misuses of translingual assignments, and I feel that the troubling questions raised in his article need to be brought out more forcefully so that composition and literary scholars stop ignoring these language concerns. In short, the conversation should be expanded.

“Why are writing teachers so eager to incorporate ideas and practices that they do not fully understand?” asks Matsuda (480). The problem, touchy enough to keep it out of many forums, is that too many academics do not know enough to comprehend their own misunderstandings. Instead of learning languages or codes, they build myths of their own abilities based on insufficient exams taken as graduate students or on viewings of television programs and films that supposedly impart knowledge of alternative modes of speech. As a result, they think they know more than they know.

Professors without the experience of thinking, conversing, reading, writing, and publishing in a second language fail to inculcate their students with a desire to engage in the serious efforts required to

surpass monolingualism. As a student, I found that almost all the multilingual classmates I met entered into postsecondary studies with a command of multiple systems of communication that they continued to develop at a university. Lifelong monolinguals, by contrast, found a way out by taking a minimum number of courses, passing a dictionary-assisted translation exam, attending an “intensive” summer session, or finding some other short-term solution that allowed them to dispense with language requirements and return to their monolingual existence. Even so, they subsequently considered themselves multilingual and, more harmfully, passed along this conception of multilingualism to their students. From there, it’s easy to pass off the occasional insertion of foreign terms as translingual practice or the employment of social-networking slang as code-switching. As a remedy, the abolition of university language requirements might allow professors to stop fooling their students and themselves.

“If the teacher is a monolingual user of the dominant variety of English who does not normally code-mesh, asking linguistically diverse students to do so in the teacher’s presence would not go over well,” observes Matsuda. “The reverse is also true: imagine someone who grew up speaking the dominant variety of English trying to speak African American English; the result would likely be embarrassing, if not offensive” (483). In some ways, code-switching—or code-meshing, perhaps a more useful term—leads to more-insidious concerns. Even professors who have gotten past the language-exam hurdle generally have a sneaking suspicion that they do not really function in a second language. When it comes to African American speech, however, all sorts of people claim expertise after listening to a bit of hip-hop or watching movies or television programs featuring African Americans. As a musician traveling the “chitlin circuit,” I heard a wide variety of African American speech around the United States and learned that these ever-evolving idi-

oms can be hard to master and even more difficult to maintain in an environment where the meanings and pronunciations of terms hardly remain static. Thinking otherwise reveals an academic bias; countless episodes of *Treme* will not take the place of language learning, even if the language is merely considered a code performed by supposedly lower-class people.

The complications of classroom code-switching do not only involve African American speech. Bollywood movies, for example, have spawned a new school of professors who fancy themselves versed in mixtures of Hindi and English, often based on little, if any, viewing of actual films. One professor with whom I studied added Bollywood to his list of “specialties” and even taught a course that included this topic, solely on the basis of having seen *Slumdog Millionaire*. Clearly, the possibilities for academic mischief expand with each new successfully marketed exotic discovery. In an effort to forestall these affronts to academic integrity, we must ensure that the discussion initiated by Matsuda continues.

Marco Katz Montiel
MacEwan University

Reply:

I am grateful to Marco Katz Montiel for sharing his thoughtful response. I agree about the need to extend this conversation and to raise the awareness of various perspectives and practices that have long existed outside the currently popular focus on translingual writing. I also agree that, to engage in pedagogical practices that involve language differences, scholars and teachers need to develop more than a superficial understanding of language, language learning, and language use. I have elaborated on these ideas in another recent piece (“It’s the Wild West out There: A New Linguistic Frontier in U.S. College Composition”; *Literacy as Translingual*

Practice: Between Communities and Classrooms; ed. A. Suresh Canagarajah [Routledge, 2013] 128–38; print). I hope these discussions will stimulate the development of theoretical and pedagogical practices that are better informed and more sensitive to the lived experience of a wide variety of language users.

Paul Kei Matsuda
Arizona State University, Tempe

Beauvoir, Colonialism, and Race

TO THE EDITOR:

In “Simone de Beauvoir and Practical Deliberation” (124.1 [2009]: 199–205), Emily Grosholz argues that “Beauvoir’s work exhibits a methodological trajectory as Beauvoir sees more and more clearly that philosophical writing is performative as well as descriptive and that the enterprise she has undertaken is a form of rational persuasion rather than the construction of a ‘correct’ theory about people” (199). Following Claude Imbert (“Simone de Beauvoir: A Woman Philosopher in the Context of Her Generation”; *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir*; ed. Emily Grosholz [Clarendon, 2004] 3–21; print) and Michèle le Doeuff (“Towards a Friendly, Transatlantic Critique of *The Second Sex*”; *The Legacy of Simone de Beauvoir*; ed. Emily Grosholz [Clarendon, 2004] 22–29; print), Grosholz reconstructs the process of Beauvoir’s developing analysis of women in the context of Beauvoir’s generation. Most important in Beauvoir’s work is how she persuaded us to acknowledge the *situation* of women, specifically those of her generation. Beginning with *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (1947) and ending with Beauvoir’s active engagement with the feminist movement in France, which crystallized around the issue of reproductive rights in the 1970s, Grosholz traces an important tendency in Beauvoir’s conception of philosophical method (200).

When Beauvoir led readers to see the untenable contradiction in the estate of women in

The Second Sex (1949), the response brought her public acclaim and notoriety, which enabled her to frame and introduce legislation that at last galvanized feminism in France (203). Focusing on Beauvoir’s later political involvement, during the 1970s, Grosholz explains Beauvoir’s contribution to the legalization of abortion in France. On 5 April 1971, the “Manifesto of 343” was published

in *Le nouvel observateur*, signed by a wide range of women who admitted to having had an abortion; Beauvoir was among them. By signing the manifesto, they all risked imprisonment since abortion was illegal; the movement Choisir was created by Gisèle Halimi, a Tunisian practicing as a lawyer in Paris, to defend those women in case they were prosecuted, and Beauvoir was elected its first president. (204)

In 1972 the movement Choisir gained more public acclaim when Halimi, backed by the Women’s Liberation Movement in Paris, became involved in the “Bobigny affair.” The affair concerned the legal case of a young woman who had been raped and had subsequently undergone an abortion. Through the case, Halimi attacked the 1920 law that criminalized abortion: “she argued that the law punished the poor disproportionately, because rich women had only to cross the English Channel to obtain a legal and safe abortion.” The French parliament was influenced by supporters of Choisir—the public, the Women’s Liberation Movement in Paris, Beauvoir, Halimi, and Simone Weil—and introduced “law 75-17 in 1975, which legalized the interruption of pregnancy under certain conditions. This law was at first provisional, but a definitive version, law 79-1204, was passed on New Year’s Eve 1979” (204). From Grosholz’s analysis, we acquire a new sense of the development of Beauvoir’s philosophy. Beauvoir came to see that her ethical and political

writings on the situation of women in France could be used as a practical deliberative tool, an insight that influenced Beauvoir's participation in political movements focusing on the rights of women in France. Beauvoir and her colleagues experienced, in legislation, the concrete possibilities that the actions of women could create for the freedom of women.

Despite my engagement with Grosholz's article, I would like to point out a narrowness of perspective in her approach to Beauvoir's work. Grosholz traces the trajectory of Beauvoir's analysis beginning with *Pyrrhus and Cinéas* (1944) and culminating in Beauvoir's role in the feminist movement in France, which crystallized around the issue of reproductive rights in the 1970s. Describing this trajectory, Grosholz points to Halimi's influence on Beauvoir's political choices. However, Halimi's influence on Beauvoir's work began much earlier, with Beauvoir's participation in the Djamila Boupacha trial, which began in 1960 (Beauvoir and Halimi; *Djamila Boupacha* [Gallimard, 1962] 63, 71; print). Boupacha was an Algerian woman who was sentenced to death by the French government for planting bombs in the European quarters of Algeria. By leaving aside Beauvoir's involvement in the trial, Grosholz neglects an important dimension of Beauvoir's analysis, for Beauvoir was concerned not only with gender but also with race and colonialism throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Thus, Grosholz fails to mention how Beauvoir's memoir *America Day by Day* (1948) influenced Beauvoir's treatment of philosophy as involving performative, descriptive, and deliberative practices. (D. R. Alfonso explores this aspect of the memoir in his article "Transatlantic Perspectives on Race: Simone de Beauvoir's Phenomenology of Race in *America Day by Day*" [*Philosophy Today* 49.5 (2005): 89–99; print].) Grosholz is too eager to identify the practical thrust of Beauvoir's writings with feminism; if she had taken into account the racial and colonial influence on Beauvoir's method of approach, she would

have been able to make a stronger argument. It is important to see how the intersection of race, colonialism, sex, and gender influenced the deliberative practices that emerged in Beauvoir's philosophy. Like *The Second Sex*, *America Day by Day* emphasizes the situation of an oppressed group, black Americans, describes it carefully, and analyzes it as a system of oppression. We can appreciate the depth of her insight, I would argue, when we notice how she combines her perspective on gender with a perspective on racism and the impact of colonialism. Beauvoir's grip on race, colonialism, and gender in combination shows the force of her writing as a form of practical deliberation.

Nathalie Nya

Penn State University, University Park

Reply:

I acknowledge the main thrust of Nathalie Nya's criticism—that Beauvoir's growing realization that her philosophical writings had practical as well as theoretical import was, one might say, a river fed by many streams. In my essay I discuss the collaboration between Beauvoir and Gisèle Halimi in the early 1970s, when they worked together in the movement Choisir, but Nya reminds us that their work began in 1960, around the trial of Djamila Boupacha. Beauvoir recorded her opposition to French colonialism during the Algerian War in articles published in *Les temps modernes* over many years, and both she and Sartre received death threats because of their opposition. Nya also reminds us that Beauvoir was profoundly disturbed by the racism she found in the south and in the northern cities of the United States, recorded in her memoir *America Day by Day*. And her concern for the working class in Europe was expressed in the (misguided) enthusiasm for Soviet and Chinese Marxism she shared with many postwar French intellectuals. Finally, as Claude Imbert explains in the essay cited by Nya, the appalling

fact of World War II tormented her generation of philosophers: what good was the philosophy of the Enlightenment if it could do nothing to prevent a global scourge that killed one out of every ten human beings on the face of the earth?

The question, then, is how to construct a practical philosophy that will take into account not only sex discrimination but also discrimination due to race and the long shadow of colonialism? Nya is optimistic about the project and argues that I could have given a stronger account of Beauvoir's drift toward a conception of philosophy as closer to practical deliberation than theory construction by considering her involvement with other kinds of liberation movements. I agree with her on that point. I think Nya also hopes that a philosopher who can consider race, gender, and the legacy of colonialism (and perhaps also class structure) together will produce a fuller and more effective analysis.

I am not so sure I agree with the latter claim, which I may not be fairly ascribing to Nya. Over the years, teaching philosophy courses dealing with racism and sexism, I have been struck by the importance of first-person narratives. We read, for example, the memoirs of W. E. B. Du Bois beside his more systematic writings, and we read the memoirs of Beauvoir alongside *The Second Sex*. The testimony of those singular figures (like the testimony of Augustine or Rousseau), recording the details of their lives, their personal quest for freedom and equality and the many ways in which they tried to share their quest, is essential. Du Bois and Beauvoir also wrote fiction, which particularizes and dramatizes the insights they consider philosophically and scientifically elsewhere. For his writings to be effective, Du Bois had to speak out of his situation (to borrow an existentialist term) as a black man in early-twentieth-century America; and Beauvoir had to speak out of her situation as a woman in mid-twentieth-century France. Their more philosophical writings take up the task of generalization, as do the books and editorials of those who, inspired by their thought, carry it forward.

Moreover, it is often difficult to combine categories of philosophical-political analysis.

My colleague Kathryn Gines has just finished a critical book on Hannah Arendt (*Hannah Arendt and the Negro Question* [Indiana UP, 2014]) and is working on a book about Beauvoir. In the latter, she goes beyond the earlier criticism of Elizabeth Spelman, who noted that by considering for the most part the situation of upper-middle-class white Catholic Frenchwomen (not subject to racism, classism, anti-Semitism, or European imperialism), Beauvoir limited the ability of her analysis to lend itself to generalization (*Inessential Woman* [Beacon, 1988]). Gines notes that Beauvoir's discourse in *The Second Sex* is permeated by the analogy between the status of women and the status of slaves and that this analogy often misfires and impairs the usefulness of her thought. The apparent applicability of Hegel's master-slave dialectic obscures the many cases where the analogy fails, especially the compounded problems facing black women (and women in formerly colonized countries).

This past spring, I read a memoir by a mathematician who had suffered professionally from anti-Semitism in the 1940s and 1950s in the United States. I kept waiting for him to protest and analyze the barriers facing women too (which struck me as I read the descriptions of the mathematical worlds he inhabited, worlds I often observed and admired but couldn't enter in the 1960s and 1970s), but he never did. At first I was angry about the silence, but afterward I realized that he was giving his own testimony, speaking out of his own situation, probably in the hope that other people who had been excluded could think about his example and be inspired to generalize from it. This returns us to the singular efficacy of the individual voice in the philosophical texts that address oppression and liberation. Like Beauvoir, one must speak for oneself first, but publicly, and later reflect, in writing and in the public forum, on the possibilities of generalization, while listening attentively to responses to that public speech. Thus, I look forward to Gines's next book, and to the book that will soon follow from Nya's doctoral dissertation.

Emily Grosholz

Penn State University, University Park

Minutes of the MLA Executive Council

[Note: The Executive Council voted to approve these minutes at its October 2014 meeting.]

THE COUNCIL MET ON 20–21 MAY 2014 AT THE MLA OFFICE IN NEW YORK. PRESIDENT Margaret W. Ferguson presided. The officers present were First Vice President Roland Greene, Second Vice President Kwame Anthony Appiah, and Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal. The Executive Council members present were Samer M. Ali, Barbara K. Altmann, Brian Croxall, Gaurav G. Desai, Donald E. Hall, María Herrera-Sobek, Margaret R. Higonnet, Lanisa Kitchiner, Lutz Koepnick, Paula M. Krebs, Tracy Denean Sharpley-Whiting, and Mecca Jamilah Sullivan. Debra Ann Castillo and Alicia M. de la Torre Falzon were absent. The MLA staff members present were Director of Administration and Finance Terrence Callaghan, Director of Bibliographic Information Services and Editor of the *MLA International Bibliography* Barbara Chen, Director of Scholarly Communication Kathleen Fitzpatrick, Associate Executive Director and Director of Publishing Operations Judy Goulding, Director of Convention Programs Maribeth T. Kraus, Director of Research and ADE David Laurence, Director of Programs and ADFL Dennis Looney, and Assistant to the Executive Director and Coordinator of Governance Carol Zuses. Controller Arlene Barnard was present for discussions of the MLA budget (see item 1, below).

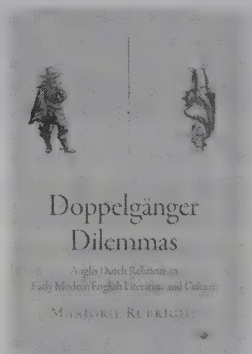
In the morning on 20 May, following a meeting of the council's Compensation and Benefits Committee, the council convened in regular session to begin working through the reports and action items on its agenda. After lunch, a regular session for the full council was followed by separate meetings of the council's strategic-planning subcommittees (see item 6, below). At the end of the afternoon, the full council reconvened to hear the reports of the subcommittee chairs and to discuss a report from the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (see item 10, below). On 21 May, following a meeting of the council's Audit Committee, the council first met in executive session for the annual review of the policy documents that pertain to the MLA staff and to the working environment at the MLA headquarters office and for the annual review of the executive director. Following the executive session, the council convened in regular session to continue working through its agenda. After lunch, the council held its final regular session. The council adjourned at 2:55 p.m., having concluded all the business before it.

The council took the following actions:

1. *Administration and Finance.* The Finance Committee presented a midyear report on finances with a summary of association income and expenses in the fiscal year 2013–14 after seven months. The committee reviewed changes in the projections for the major revenue and expense categories—some revenue projections were down slightly, and some expense categories showed small increases—and noted that the projected deficit had increased since the start of the fiscal year.

The Finance Committee also presented to the council a tentative budget for the fiscal year 2014–15 that projected a deficit of \$603,680 in the association's unrestricted fund. The deficit was due largely to expenses associated with office infrastructure changes and the move of the MLA office scheduled for summer 2015 (see below). The committee noted that the proposed budget for 2014–15 included rate increases for library subscriptions to

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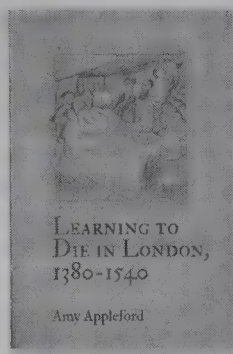
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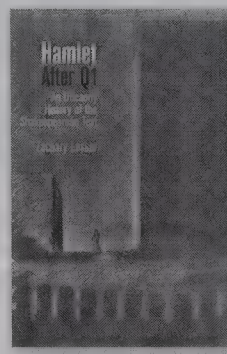
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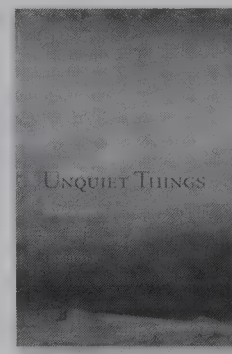
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PMLA and higher convention registration fees. The council decided to cancel the proposed increase in the registration fee for student members and unemployed members. After completing its review of the tentative budget for the fiscal year 2014–15, the council voted to approve it as revised.

The council received an additional report from the Finance Committee on the work the staff had done in recent years to plan for the July 2015 expiration of the association's current lease at 26 Broadway. After evaluating the association's future space needs and looking at available space in lower-rent areas of New York City, the staff had requested proposals from five landlords. The staff outlined for the council the proposals received and the range of costs involved. After discussing the report, the council authorized the staff to negotiate a fifteen- or twenty-year lease on new office space and authorized the executive director to sign the lease if it did not depart significantly from the parameters presented in the report.

Finally, the council designated EisnerAmper LLP to conduct the audit of the association's fiscal year 2013–14 accounts.

2. *Approval of the February 2014 Council Minutes.* The council approved the minutes of its February 2014 meeting for publication in the October 2014 issue of PMLA.

3. *Confirmation of Actions Taken between Council Meetings.* The council took three actions between its February and May meetings. (1) It agreed to sign on to a letter from the National Coalition against Censorship to the members of the South Carolina Senate Finance Committee that asked the senators to reject funding cuts that the South Carolina House of Representatives had voted to impose on the College of Charleston and the University of South Carolina, Upstate, because House members objected to assigned readings with LGBT content. (2) It proposed two sets of constitutional amendments, one that allows the reorganization of divisions and discussion groups into forums and one that removes references in the constitution to printed matter, including a printed directory. (3) It agreed to send an open letter in support of Internet neutrality to the chair of the Federal Communications Commission and approved a related explanatory statement aimed at the MLA membership.

When these actions were proposed, the council's procedure for making decisions between meetings was implemented (see Oct. 2010 PMLA 1102), and the full council was given the opportunity to discuss the actions on its electronic discussion list. Since the council was unanimous in its approval of the proposed actions, the council's advisory committee did not have to act. At the present meeting, the council confirmed these decisions.

4. *Proposal of a Constitutional Amendment.* The council proposed that article 3.D of the MLA constitution be amended to eliminate the limiting gender reference to "men and women of letters." In accordance with article 13.A of the MLA constitution, the council's proposal for an amendment to article 3.D will be forwarded to the Committee on Amendments to the Constitution for action.

5. *Dissemination of the Report from the Task Force on Doctoral Study in Modern Language and Literature.* At its February meeting, the council had considered the dissemination of the task force report and suggested the development of a framing document that would guide discussion of the

report and of its recommendations (see Oct. 2014 PMLA 864). At the present meeting, Rosemary Feal presented to the council the materials that had been developed in response to the council's suggestion: an executive summary outlining the goals and recommendations that the task force encouraged doctoral programs to pursue and a letter from the council proposing that all stakeholders—faculty members, graduate students, staff members, graduate school administrators, deans, and provosts—discuss the report in the context of local campus structures and practices.

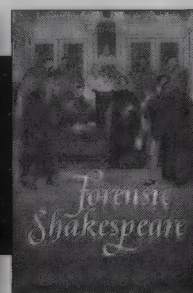
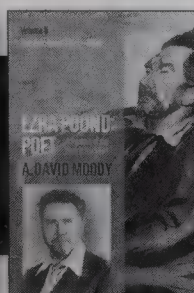
6. *Strategic-Planning Subcommittees.* Because the council's strategic-planning subcommittee on the activities of the divisions and discussion groups had completed its work, the president had consulted with council members before the present meeting about reconfiguring the three strategic-planning subcommittees. Council members agreed to establish a new subcommittee on the humanities workforce. Taking into account the council's previous approval, in October 2013, of an expanded charge for a continuing subcommittee (see May 2014 PMLA 586), the council decided that the three strategic-planning subcommittees will focus on K–16 collaborations, the MLA's reach, and the humanities workforce. New council members received their subcommittee assignments, and some continuing council members' assignments changed. The newly configured subcommittees held meetings on 20 May.

The subcommittee on K–16 collaborations (Margaret Ferguson, chair; Donald Hall; Margaret Higonnet; Paula Krebs) discussed a possible grant-funded project to establish local partnerships among colleges, community colleges, and high schools for the purpose of addressing issues related to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and college readiness. The subcommittee identified two localities where such partnerships could be established, and it planned to consider how members of the Delegate Assembly might participate. The subcommittee members also discussed collaborating with the National Council of Teachers of English on CCSS issues and with the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages on projects in the schools involving foreign languages, which are not covered by the CCSS.

The subcommittee on the MLA's reach (Roland Greene, chair; Samer Ali; Gaurav Desai; María Herrera-Sobek; Lanisa Kitchiner; Lutz Koepnick) began by discussing plans for the MLA's first international conference (see next item). Turning to other aspects of the MLA's reach, the subcommittee members considered expanding contacts with master's institutions and community colleges. Greene explained that he and Margaret Ferguson were planning to visit these kinds of institutions in northern California to gather information that will allow the council to develop specific outreach projects. There was also discussion of possible outreach to high school teachers.

The new subcommittee on the humanities workforce (Kwame Anthony Appiah, chair; Barbara Altmann; Brian Croxall; Tracy Sharpley-Whiting; Mecca Sullivan) focused on the preparation of graduate students for academic and nonacademic careers and on the working conditions of adjuncts and considered strategies for and constraints on association action. Also discussed was the importance of local action, which could be guided by the best practices that several departments and institutions have developed.

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The subcommittee planned to explore ways to disseminate these best practices (e.g., through a consultancy service).

7. *Report on Planning for the First MLA-Sponsored International Symposium.* The council received a progress report on planning for the international symposium to be held in Düsseldorf in June 2016 (see May 2014 *PMLA* 586). The members of the local-arrangements committee in Düsseldorf are working to generate interest in the conference and are addressing issues such as simultaneous translation, innovative session formats, and the balance between European and American participants. The composition of panels will be based on responses to a broad call for papers. To draw attention to the symposium, the council planned to hold sessions at the MLA conventions in Vancouver and Austin on demographic changes in Europe and on the relation of geopolitical changes to the study of language and literature.

8. *Review of the Executive Council's Report to the 2015 Delegate Assembly.* At its February meeting, following the provisions of article 7.B.3 of the MLA constitution, the Executive Council had reviewed the resolutions that the Delegate Assembly had approved in January 2014 and determined that it could not forward one of them to the membership for ratification (see Oct. 2014 *PMLA* 864). When the council does not forward to the membership a resolution that the Delegate Assembly approved, the constitution requires the council to report to the assembly the reasons for its action. At the present meeting, the council reviewed and approved a draft of its report to the assembly.

9. *Report from the Working Group on the Future of the Print Record.* The council received an update on the work of the group established by the council in May 2013 to revise the 1995 MLA Statement on the Significance of Primary Records in the light of new publishing technologies and the deaccessioning of print collections by libraries (see Jan. 2014 *PMLA* 130). The members of the group met in January 2014 to begin their work and decided to draft a public statement outlining the issues they would address (e.g., space for storage of printed materials, budget constraints, the increasing importance of digital resources) and setting out their plan of action. The council reviewed the statement and identified an additional issue for discussion: the ecological impact of and the costs associated with transporting books to and from storage locations. The council approved the statement, authorized its publication, and gave permission for the MLA's name to be used in connection with the activities of the working group.

10. *Report from the Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities (CAFPRR).* At its February meeting, the council had discussed making a statement on the academic-freedom issues raised in the aftermath of the approval by the American Studies Association of a resolution calling for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions. The council's discussion prompted a request to CAFPRR that it update its *Tool Kit on Academic Freedom* to take account of these issues (see Oct. 2014 *PMLA* 864). On the first day of the present meeting, the council received CAFPRR's response to this request, which presented two texts for the council's consideration.

The first text was a proposed revision to the 2009 *MLA Statement on Academic Freedom*. The council could

not reach consensus on the revision and planned to ask CAFPRR for assistance. The second text was a draft statement on the academic-freedom issues that the council had discussed in February. Discussion of this text allowed the council to identify more precisely the issues it wished to address and prompted the council to ask one of its members to draft an alternative paragraph that would serve the council's needs. On the second day of the meeting, the council reviewed the alternative paragraph and decided that the issues addressed required contextualization. The paragraph could not be revised during the meeting, so the president proposed to supervise the necessary work and present the result to the council in October.

11. *MLA Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement.* The council selected Rolena Adorno, Sterling Professor of Spanish at Yale University, as the seventh recipient of the association's Award for Lifetime Scholarly Achievement. The award will be conferred during the 2015 annual convention in Vancouver.

12. *Moratorium on the Nomination of Honorary Members.* The council received recommendations from the Committee on Honors and Awards (CHA) pertaining to the nomination of honorary members. When it was noted that one of the scholars recommended for honorary membership had been a regular MLA member as recently as 2009, the council discussed the category of honorary membership and the nature of the honor involved. Because of the questions raised during this discussion, the council declined to nominate the scholars recommended by the CHA, decided to discuss the status of the category at a future meeting, and imposed a moratorium on the nomination of honorary members until the status of the category is resolved.

13. *List of Potential Appointees to the Profession Editorial Collective.* At its October 2013 meeting, the council had approved a list of potential appointees to the *Profession Editorial Collective* that did not provide full coverage of the field (see May 2014 *PMLA* 588). At the present meeting, the council approved a supplemental list of potential appointees that filled in many of the lacunae in the original list.

14. *Council Meeting Schedule.* The council approved the following dates for its meetings in 2017: 24–25 February, 18–19 May, and 27–28 October.

15. *Committee Appointments.* The council made two committee appointments. The names of all new and continuing committee members appear at the MLA Web site.

16. *Request from a Member.* The council received a request from a member that included eight proposals for improving access to the convention for non-tenure-track faculty members and graduate students. The council discussed the request at length and noted that the proposals had implications not only for the association's budget but also for the interests and goals of the membership as a whole. Council members elaborated on how some of the proposals might be pursued, suggested additional ways to assist adjuncts, and discussed how to call attention to the obligations of departments and universities to support their students and teachers. The council asked the staff to prepare a report for the October council meeting that outlines the budget implications of the proposals put forward in the request and that takes into account the broader agenda articulated during the council's discussion of the request.

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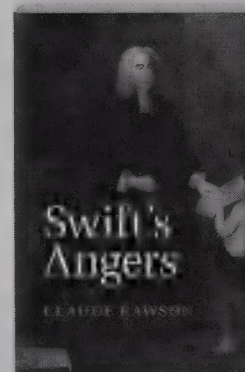
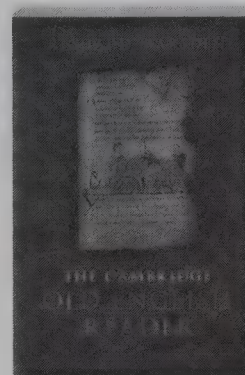
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Timothy Dow Adams, West Virginia University, Morgantown, 25 October 2014
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 Lowell Bouma, Georgia Southern University, 20 August 2014
 Dorothy H. Brown, Loyola University, New Orleans, 13 January 2013
 Arthur Charles Buck, West Virginia University, Morgantown, 18 August 2014
 Joseph E. Cascio, Jr., Saint John's University, Jamaica, 15 May 2013
 William O. Chaney, Defiance College, 7 September 2014
 Corning Chisholm, Deerfield Academy, Massachusetts, 12 December 2013
 Lawrence Mason Clopper, Indiana University, Bloomington, 7 June 2014
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 Langdon Elsbree, Claremont McKenna College, 21 June 2014
 Bobby Fong, Ursinus College, 8 September 2014
 Phyllis M. Golding, Queens College, City University of New York, 3 July 2014
 Oscar Bernard Goodman, Brooklyn College, City University of New York, 24 June 2014
 Cynthia A. Gravlee, University of Montevallo, 13 November 2013
 Joan Joffe Hall, University of Connecticut, Storrs, 16 September 2013
 Annibel Jenkins, Georgia Institute of Technology, 20 March 2013
 Joanna B. Lipking, Northwestern University, Evanston, 1 February 2014
 Elizabeth H. D. Mazzocco, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 24 September 2014
 Virginia G. McDavid, Chicago State University, 6 November 2014
 Richard A. Milum, Ohio State University, Lima, 28 July 2014
 David Porter, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 16 November 2013
 George L. Roth, Virginia Military Institute, 13 September 2014
 Rachel I. Skalitzy, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, 1 April 2014
 Lawrence D. Stewart, California State University, Northridge, 8 March 2013
 Barrie Ruth W. Straus, Ferndale, Michigan, 17 September 2014
 Janet Thormann, College of Marin, CA, 3 January 2014
 Arthur Waldhorn, City College, City University of New York, 9 December 2013
 James M. Wells, Newberry Library, 1 September 2014
 Archibald James Welton, New York, New York, 22 May 2013
 John L. Worden, Jr., California State University, Chico, 19 January 2014
 Patricia Yaeger, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 25 July 2014

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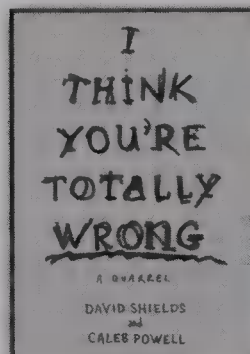
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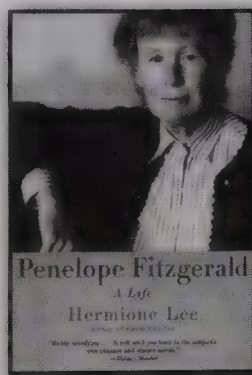
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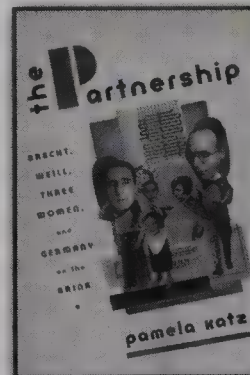
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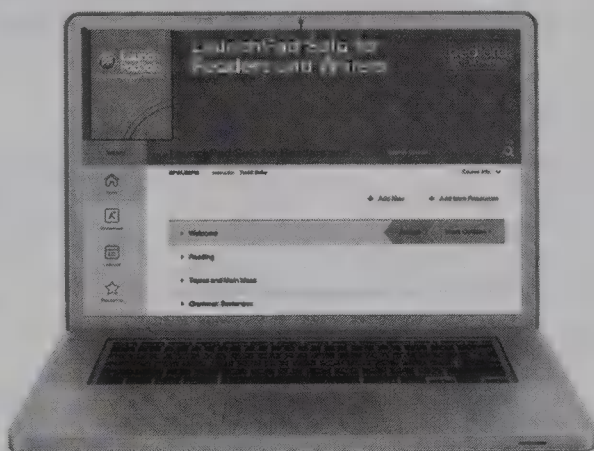
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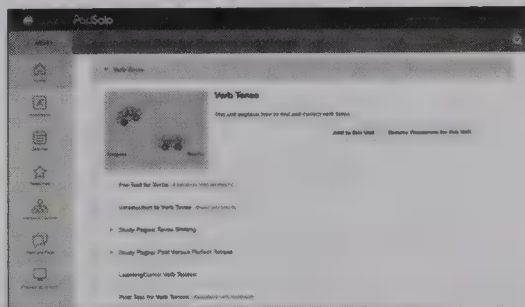
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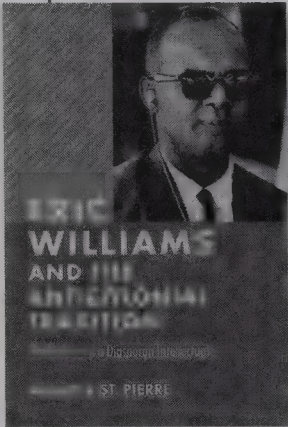
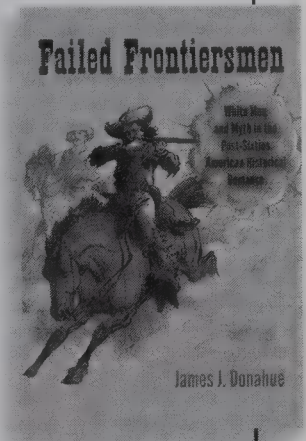
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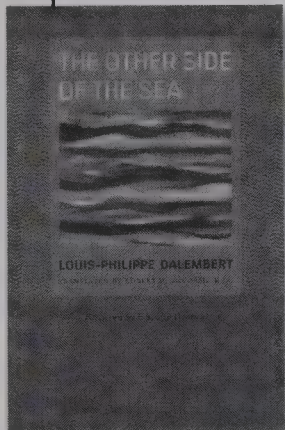
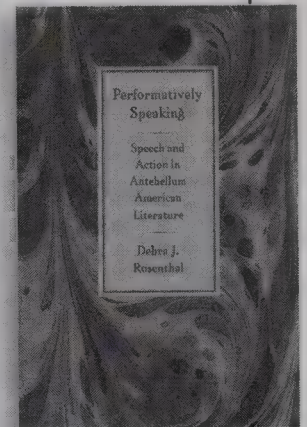
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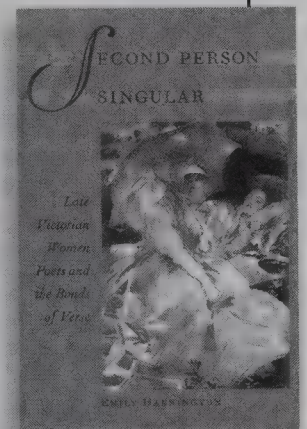
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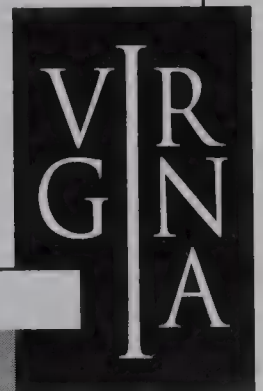
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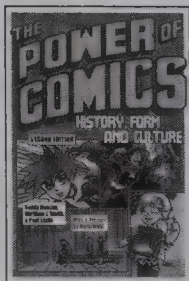
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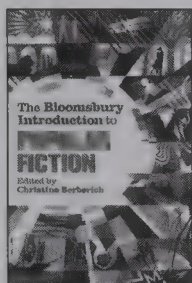


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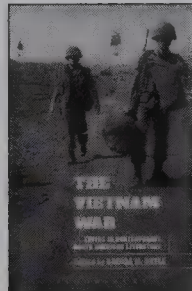


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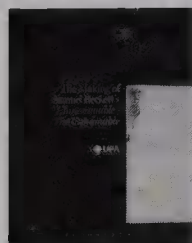


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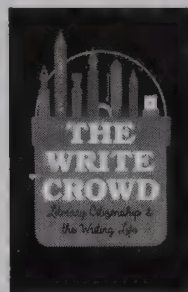


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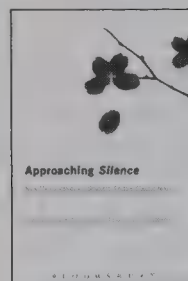
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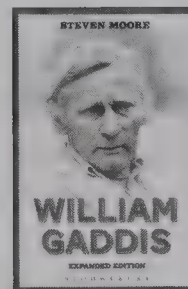
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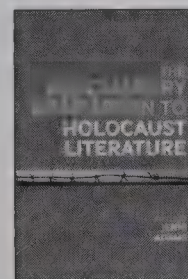
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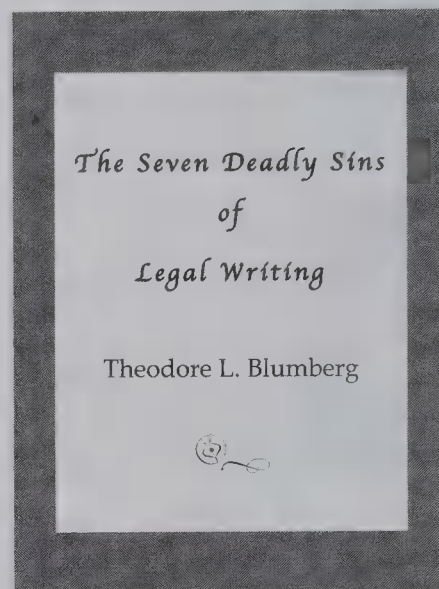
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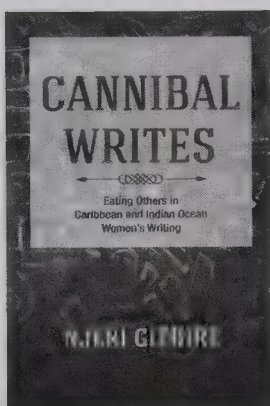
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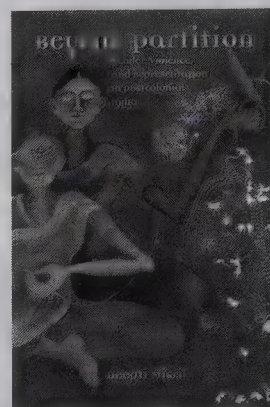
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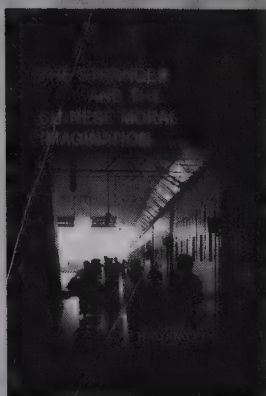
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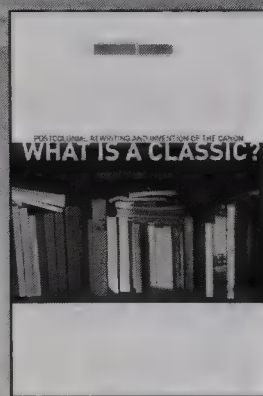


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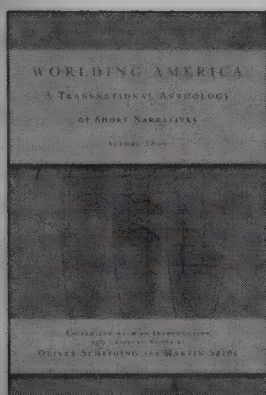
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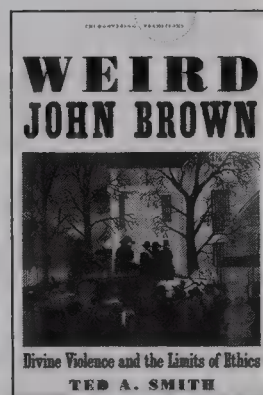
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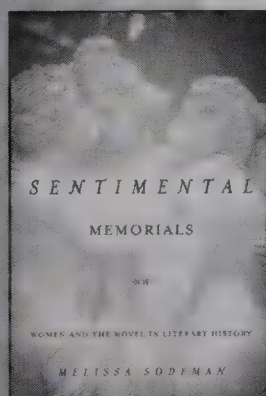
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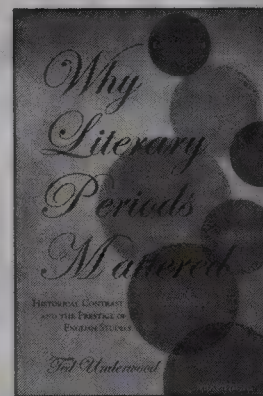
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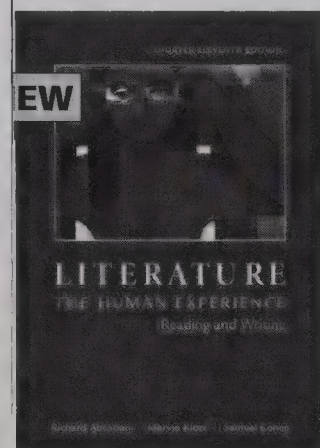
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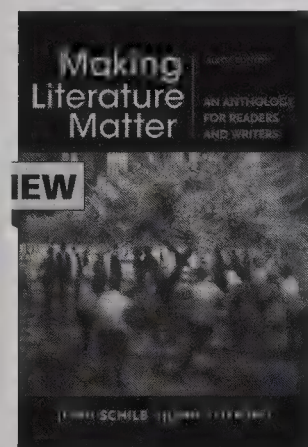
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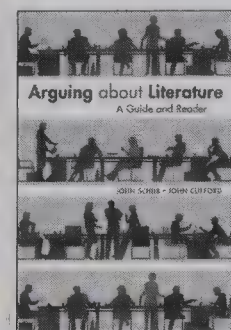
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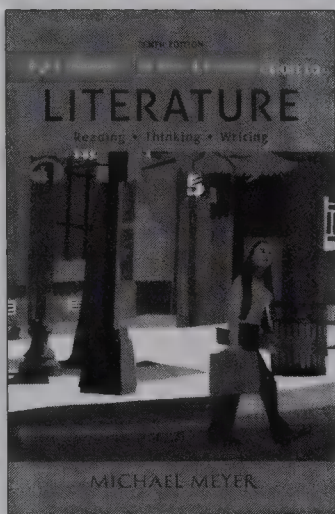
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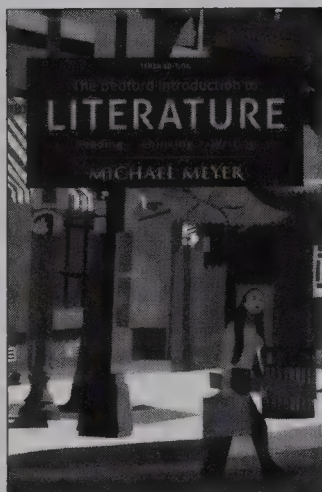
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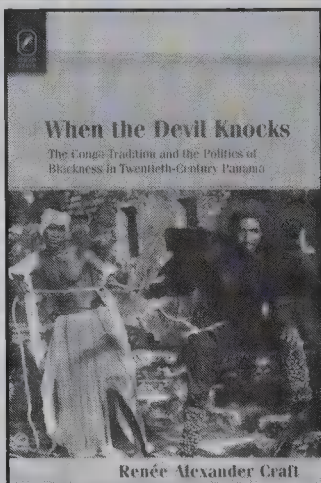
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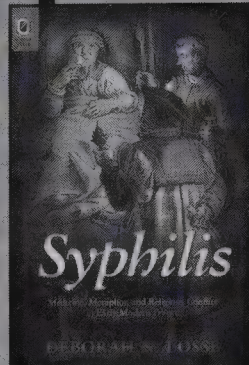
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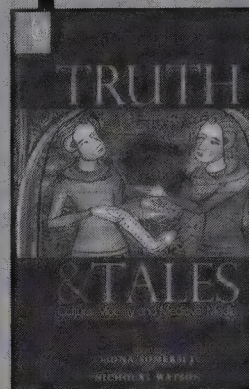


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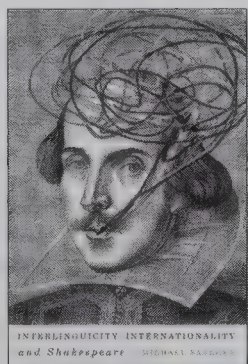
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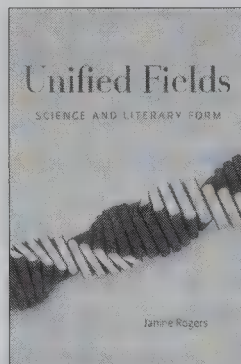
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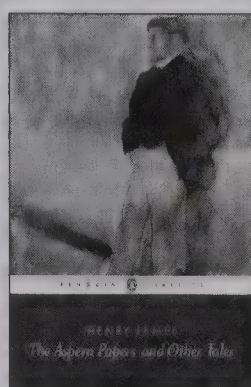
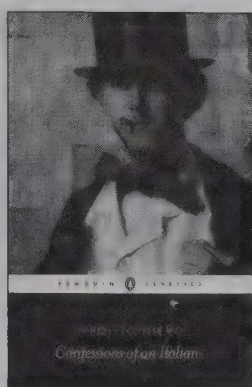
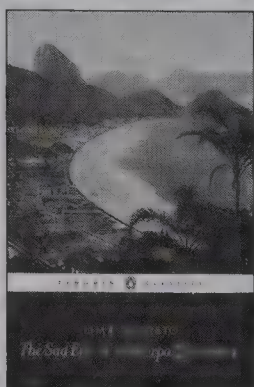
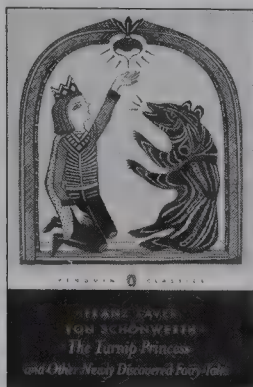
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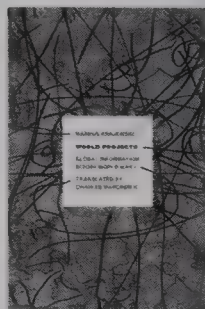
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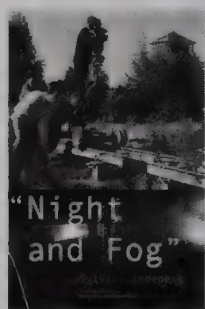
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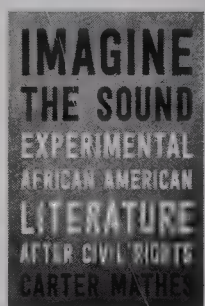
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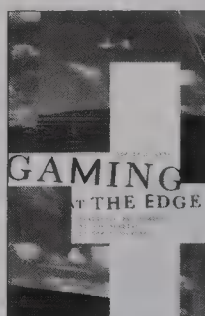
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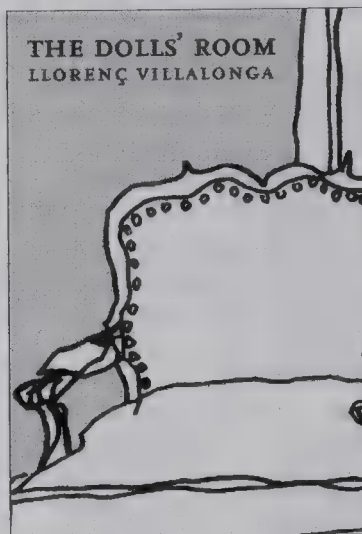
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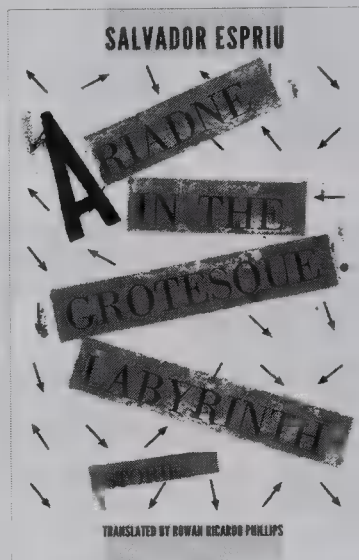
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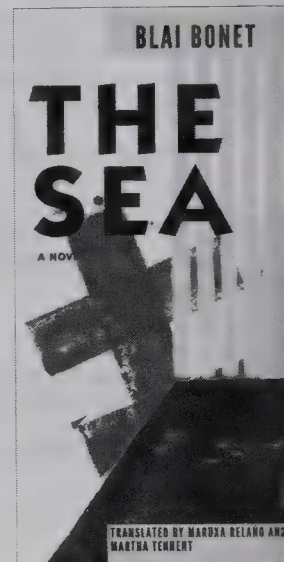
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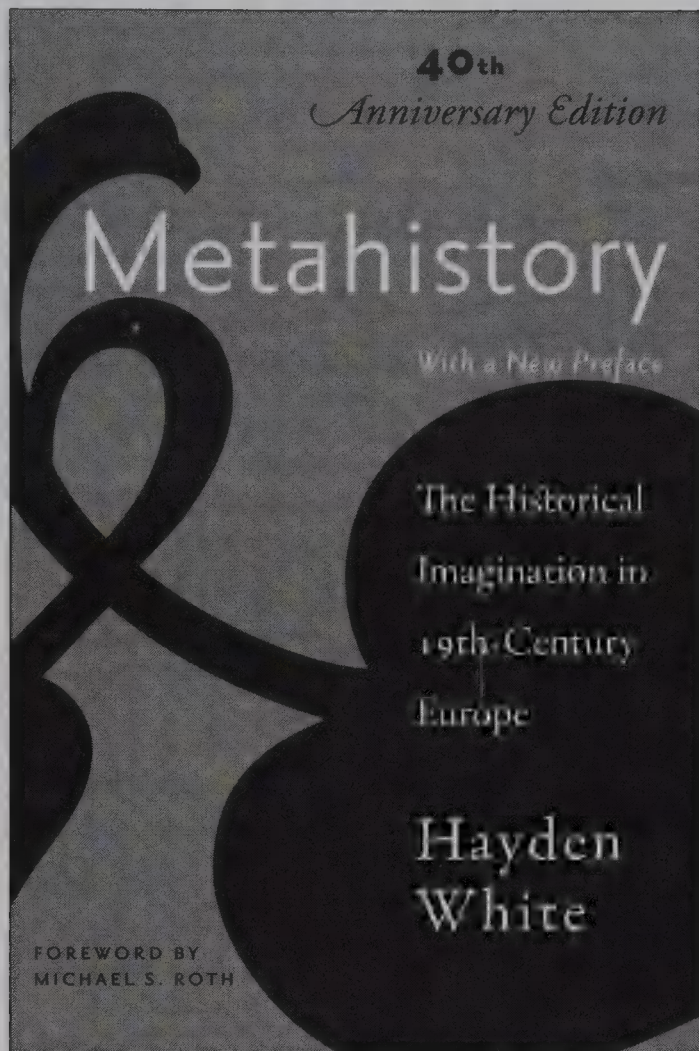
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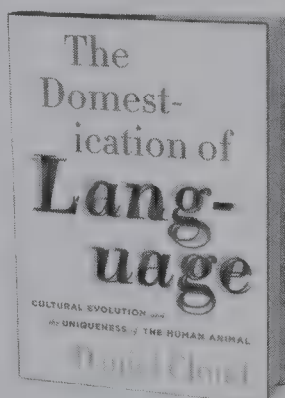
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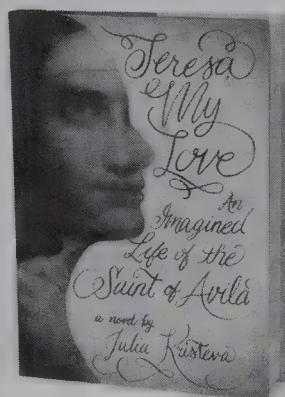
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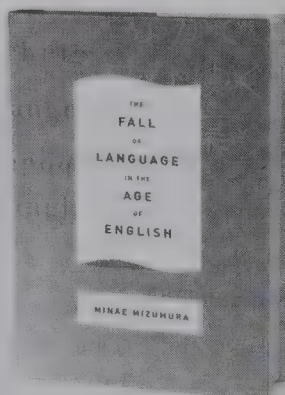
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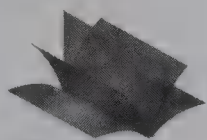
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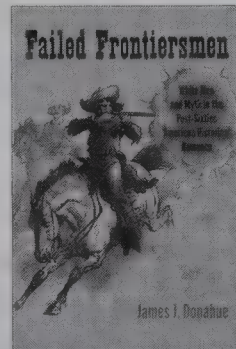
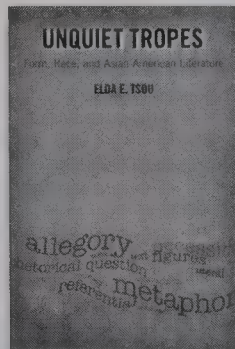
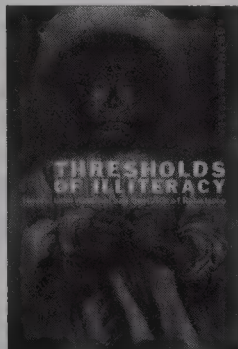




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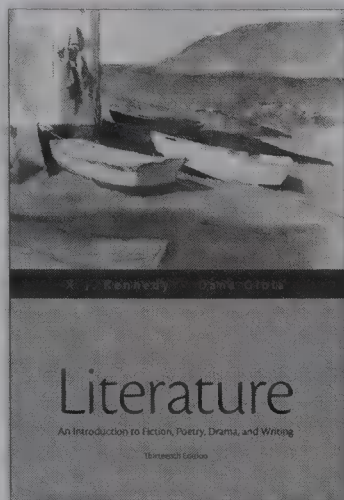
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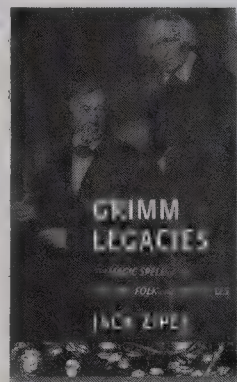
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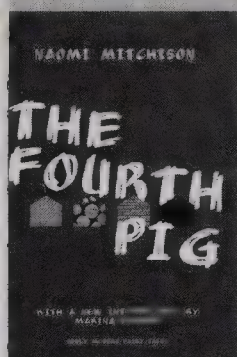
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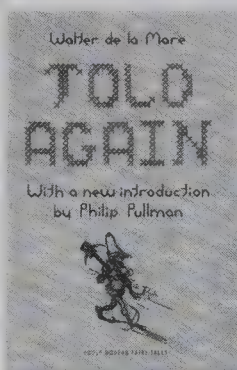
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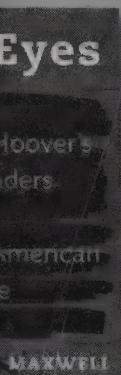
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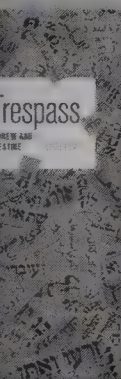
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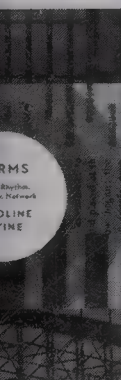
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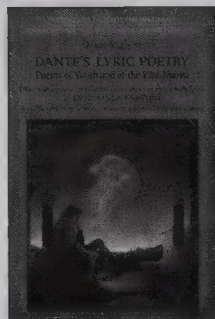


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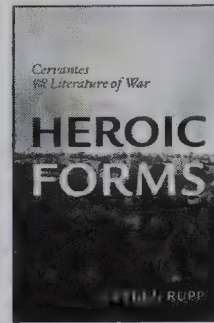


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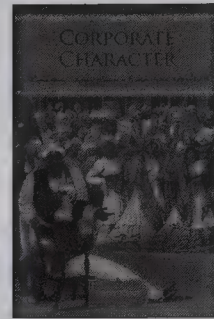


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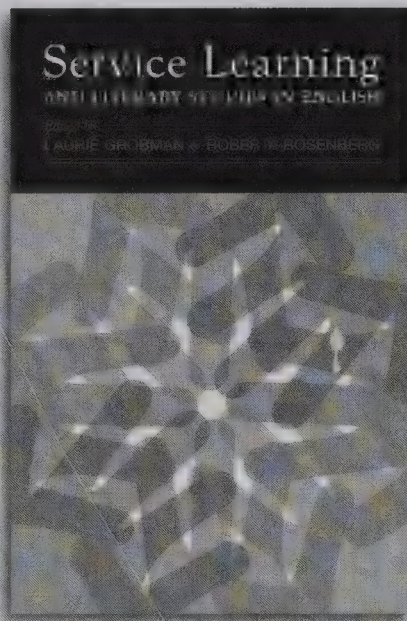
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Abstracts

15 Paul K. Saint-Amour, *Ulysses Pianola*

Now that phonography is established as the cardinal regime of audio recording, storage, and playback in studies of sonic modernity, a coeval sound-reproduction technology merits attention—the pianola, or player piano. The instrument is a pneumatic reading machine: it scans binary machine code from perforated paper rolls and translates it into acoustic events while prompting song with its scrolling lyrics. Revisiting Derrida's "Ulysses Gramophone" (1984) thirty years on, this essay finds there a proleptic critique of the gramophonocentrism Derrida's piece has helped underwrite in sound studies. The essay then turns to an extended reading of Joyce's novel, one of several modernist works that feature the pianola in their self-conceptualization. *Ulysses's* pianola at once incarnates the novel's virtuosic recall of its own language and insists on the ineliminable role of exchange and of the gendered and laboring body in any performance of stored data. (PKS-A)

37 Marius Hentea, *Federating the Modern Spirit: The 1922 Congress of Paris*

The aim of the ill-fated 1922 Congress of Paris, an international conference organized by André Breton, was to diagnose the sources of the "modern spirit." Although the congress had ambitious international goals, it was brought down by a remark with xenophobic connotations. Largely remembered today as the death knell of Paris Dada—the public fight between Tristan Tzara and Breton meant not only that the congress never took place but also that Paris Dada was dissolved—the congress's failure stemmed from the tensions involved in self-consciously defining modernism. Arguing that ambivalence over the concept shaped the main participants' understanding of the congress, I read the congress as a concrete manifestation of the impulse to federate the arts in post-World War I France. (MH)

54 Joshua Kotin, *Wallace Stevens's Point of View*

"The earth, for us, is flat and bare. / . . . Poetry // Exceeding music must take the place / Of empty heaven and its hymns. . . ." Such claims saturate Wallace Stevens's work: poetry, Stevens affirms and reaffirms, is a potential source of value in a secular world. This essay tracks his attempts to realize this potential—to write a poem that would satisfy his metaphysical need. His work is relentlessly self-critical and experimental, and over his career he develops extravagant (and ultimately hermetic) responses to a stubborn philosophical problem. My aim is to reframe critical approaches to a central topic in Stevens's poetry and to re-evaluate his relation to philosophy. In the process, I hope to suggest answers to more general questions: What is experimental poetry? How do poets think in verse? Why do poets write difficult poems? What makes a poem difficult in the first place? (JK)

69 **Scott Herring, *Djuna Barnes and the Geriatric Avant-Garde***

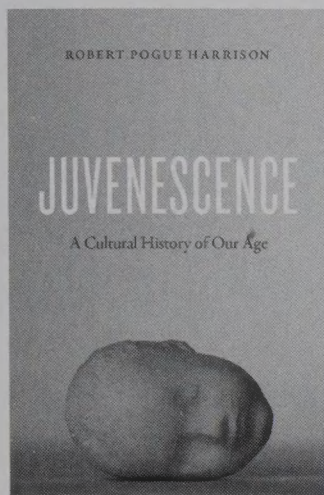
Though her publications were slight after she permanently moved to Greenwich Village, in New York City, in 1940, Djuna Barnes labored over scores of literary and nonliterary typescript drafts from the 1940s to the 1980s. This unpublished artwork constitutes a geriatric avant-garde that deepened her earlier investments in modernist aesthetics. Archived documents record the elderly writer performing the principles of high modernism—innovation, experimentalism, and novelty—across an unprecedented array of genres, such as the poem, the pharmacy order, the grocery list, the medicine regimen, the memo, and personal correspondence. This article reassesses gerontophobic depictions of Barnes as an aged recluse who lived a creatively fruitless late life. The underexplored works of her senior years are a unique version of what Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls “a senile sublime.” (SH)

92 **Lital Levy and Allison Schachter, *Jewish Literature / World Literature: Between the Local and the Transnational***

In the past two decades, scholars of world literature and transnational literary studies have called for an overhaul of the national literature model, in favor of a model based on literature’s movement beyond national boundaries. Yet across the spectrum of approaches, scholarship on world literature has focused on the languages of the metropolitan center while largely overlooking the literary cultures of the so-called peripheries. We examine Jewish literature as a transnational and multilingual body of writing whose networks of linguistic and cultural exchange provide a clear counterpoint to the center-periphery model of global literary circulation. Moreover, the essay offers one of the first comparative studies of Eastern European Jewish literature and Middle Eastern Jewish literature, furnishing new methodological tools for a comparative approach to Jewish literary culture. (LL and AS)

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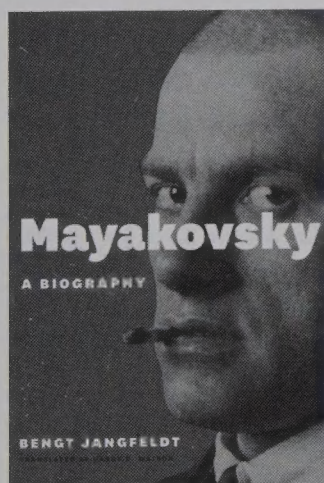
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